the weekly
Standard

SEPTEMBER 27, 2010 $4.95

TOO FEW GOOD MEN
GARY SCHMITT

America's One-Child Policy

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

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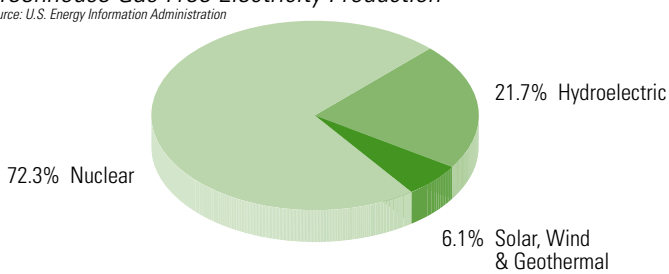

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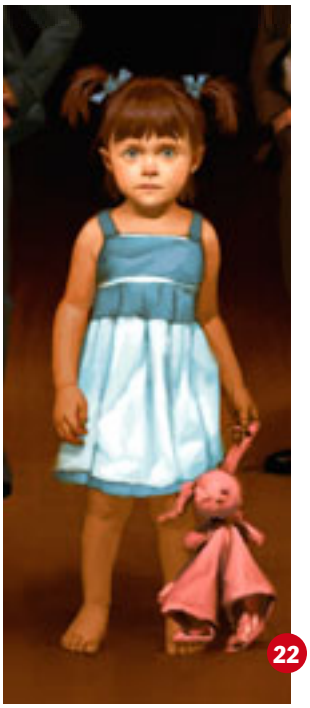

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The Cardinal and the Gout

As Pope Benedict XVI began his historic visit to Great Britain last week (things were never the same after Henry VIII's divorce), the pontiff was without one of his aides, Cardinal Walter Kasper. Earlier in the week, the German magazine *Focus* ran an interview with the cardinal who spoke of "an aggressive new atheism in England" (a point he could plausibly defend) and described arriving at Heathrow airport as akin to landing in the Third World (slightly harder to defend). The comments sparked outrage prior to the pope's trip—and no apology was issued by the cardinal, who according to his spokesman views the matter as closed. What he meant to describe, says Father Federico Lombardi (and as related by the London *Daily Telegraph*), was "a cosmopolitan reality, a melting pot of ordinary humanity and all of its diversity and its problems."

The *Telegraph* then quotes from Cardinal Kasper's secretary, Monsignor Oliver Lahl, who elaborated:

> All he was saying is that when you arrive in Britain today it is like landing in Islamabad, Mumbai and Kinshasa all at the same time, because there are so many cultures and religions and races from all over the world. He was simply saying that Britain is no longer a mono-cultural country. There was nothing racist or xenophobic in that. He can't understand why this has become such a big issue in the past. He is in bed so he can't check the Internet to look at the coverage, but he has been informed.

Sure. And the reason Cardinal Kasper is not on the trip, as noted above, is that he is ill—with gout. Yes, that swelling of the joints sometimes known as the "patrician malady," which usually has something to do with a very rich diet, is supposedly what has hindered (and hobbled) the cardinal. (For a fuller appreciation of the affliction, see Victorino Matus's Casual column on page 5.)

According to the *Telegraph*, "Msgr. Lahl confirmed that the cardinal was suffering from gout in his legs and feet and had difficulty walking and standing." And though the cardinal did attend a dinner honoring him in Rome last week, responded Lahl, "He just went for a couple of hours. It's the only appointment he has managed to fulfill all week. He will suffer for it over the next couple of days."

The Scrapbook doesn't doubt it: The disease brought on by consumption of steak and shellfish and wine and beer—aren't these common staples in the Vatican? As a priest once told The Scrapbook, "If this is poverty, bring on chastity!" ♦

Obama's Soaring Poll Numbers

Does Europe still love Obama? When last year's Transatlantic Trends poll came out, European respondents gave the new president a whopping 83 percent approval rating. This year, however, that number has dropped—to a shockingly low 78 percent. Contrast this with the latest Gallup poll showing Americans giving Obama a 45 percent approval rating, and it is clear the United States and Europe continue to see things rather differently.

The Portuguese and the Germans love Obama the most, giving him 88 percent and 87 percent approval respectively. Interestingly, Turkey's view of the president has plummeted over the last year, from 50 percent to 28 percent. (Perhaps it is not a coincidence that 48 percent of Turkish respondents are not concerned about a nuclear Iran and that a greater number of Turks desire closer cooperation with the Middle East than with the United States.)

ASSOCIATED PRESS / JAE C. HONG

The poll, sponsored in part by the German Marshall Fund, also shows Europeans having a more pessimistic view of Afghanistan than their American counterparts and a majority throughout the continent wanting troop reductions or withdrawal from that theater. Less than 50 percent of those polled approve of Obama's handling of Afghanistan and Iran, despite giving him overall high approval marks. Only 13 percent of EU respondents are in favor of aiding the opposition in Iran—most prefer economic incentives over economic sanctions when it comes to persuading Tehran to give up its nuclear ambitions. (Perhaps the Europeans could offer Ahmadinejad an enticing package in return for his pledge not to pursue nuclear power. The signing ceremony could even take place in Munich.)

Depressing, but maybe not at all surprising. (In addition, 60 percent of the French and 53 percent of Germans say "the euro has been a bad thing for their economy.") On the other hand, "Around half of Americans (53 percent) agreed that the United States has enough common values with China to be able to cooperate on international problems," whereas 63 percent of Europeans "said that China and Europe have such different values that cooperating on international problems is impossible."

But at least for the president, such polling will no doubt comfort him—following the midterm elections, he may want to consider another morale-boosting trip to Europe and a major address to an adoring (and nonvoting) public. ♦

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Them's Fightin' Words!

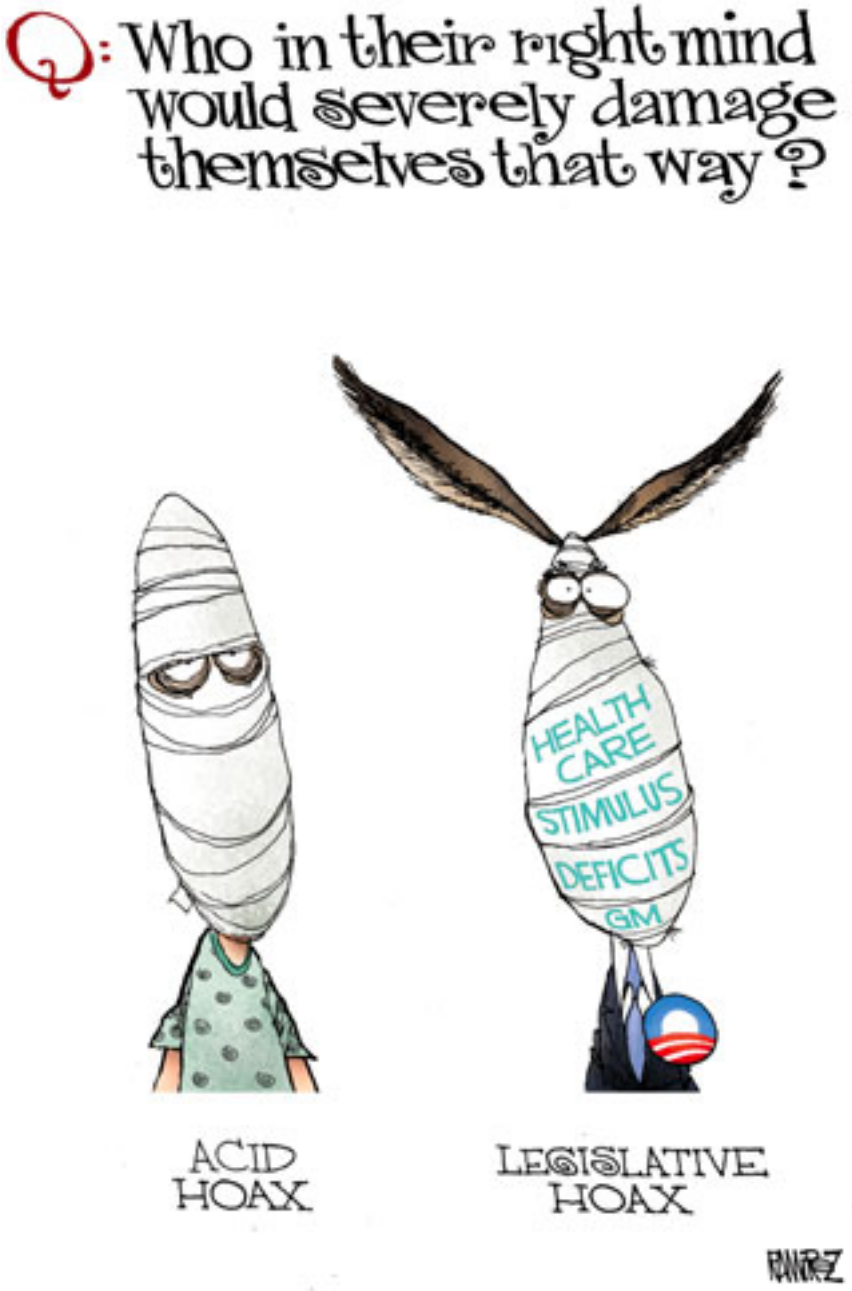
The Palm Beach Post in Florida recently reported a war of words between Democratic House member Ron Klein and his Republican challenger Allen West. West, a retired lieutenant colonel in the Army and an Iraq war veteran, called his Republican primary opponent David Brady a "knucklehead" and correctly predicted his campaign was "going to take [Brady] out behind the woodshed and we're going to give him a Southern-fried butt-whoopin'" in the primary election last month. West continued, saying, "We're going to take Ron Klein out behind the same woodshed and we'll whoop him too."

West doubled down in a recent interview. "That's how men talk," West said. "You know, college football season's started and Chris Fowler on ESPN College GameDay is going to talk about taking people behind the woodshed. . . . You can call it trash talking, you can call it whatever you want. Patton was a tough guy. MacArthur was a tough guy. William Tecumseh Sherman was a tough guy. America has a history of, when there are tough times, they look for tough leaders to take them out of those tough times and tough situations."

The *Post* also reported that West called Klein a "pathetic liberal," "cretin," "Mama's boy" for House speaker Nancy Pelosi, "little Lord Ron," and "little Ronnie"—all in one blog post on his campaign website.

That's a hefty arsenal in this war of words, but it's evident from his response that Klein could stand to fortify his munitions. "This isn't about college football. This isn't about back-slapping and using, you know, sexist remarks or threatening statements as a way of being cute or funny," Klein said. "I think a lot of people find it pretty offensive for him to be out there threatening and finding it amusing to be threatening your opponent or threatening people who don't agree with him."

The Scrapbook finds the jabs all in good fun and would offer some sage advice for the embattled Democrat on how to effectively counter the attack, but perhaps Lt. Col. Allen West captured it best: "Man up." ♦



Steve Jobs, Ninja Warrior

Bloomberg News reports on a rather bizarre incident involving Apple CEO Steve Jobs, Japanese airport security officials, and what are popularly known as Chinese or ninja throwing stars. First reported by *SPA!*, a Japanese publication, Jobs was supposedly boarding his private jet at Kansai International Airport when security stopped him for possession of the deadly bladed stars. According to the story, Jobs disposed of his stars, known as *shuriken* in Japanese, before getting on the plane, and vowed never to return to the Land of the Rising Sun. As related by *SPA!* via Bloomberg, "Jobs said it wouldn't make sense for a person to try to hijack his own plane." (No word on whether Jobs then disposed of security officials

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using a samurai sword, nunchucks, or handclaws before vanishing in a smokescreen.)

An Apple spokesman admits Jobs was in Japan for a family vacation but otherwise calls the story "pure fiction" and says that "Steve had a great time and hopes to visit Japan again soon." No doubt to avenge his honor! ♦

Beard's Revenge Pirate Ship Playhouse," large enough to fit four seated adults in its captain's quarters and with such amenities as leatherette-cushioned benches, a handcrafted crow's nest, and Douglas fir flooring and walls. All for the low price of $52,000. As for the entire neighborhood's sense of outrage, scorn, and bitter resentment engendered towards you: priceless. ♦

Bill Gates, Toilet Innovator

Meanwhile, at last month's Techonomy conference in Lake Tahoe, Calif., Bill Gates said something to host Brent Schlender that reminded us of the famous line from *The Graduate*: "I just want to say one word to you. Just one word. . . . Are you listening?. . . Plastics." Except for Gates, the word is "toilets." As the website techcrunch.com reports, the founder of Microsoft and current head of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation admitted he is obsessed with toilets—how they work and how to make them better: "Latrines are fascinating. . . . No one wants to read about it—it's one of the greatest under-investments." He also promised, "We're gonna have a breakthrough in the latrines."

According to techcrunch.com, "[Gates] said that while the flushable toilet is the gold standard, it isn't efficient at all. Someone is going to fix that." The Scrapbook only hopes a Gates-designed toilet will be easy to install, user-friendly, and with little or no chance of crashing. ♦

Recession? What Recession?

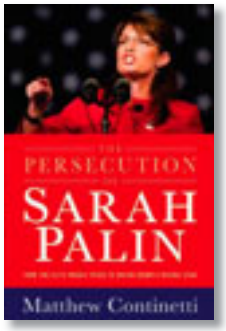
How much do you love your children? Enough to build them a tree house? Buy them a swing set? What about a pirate ship? A friend sends The Scrapbook a link to PoshTots.com: "The Most Extraordinary Children's Furnishings in the World!" It was here that we came across "Red

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'During my recent travels to North Korea and China, I received clear, strong signals that Pyongyang wants to restart negotiations on a comprehensive peace treaty with the United States and South Korea and on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The components of such an agreement . . . " (Jimmy Carter, *New York Times*, September 16, 2010). ♦

Now in Paperback

The Scrapbook is pleased to announce the paperback edition of our colleague Matthew Continetti's *The Persecution of Sarah Palin: How the Elite Media Tried to Bring Down a Rising Star*. "Matthew Continetti rips the lid off the lamestream media in this must-read book," says the former vice presidential nominee. We couldn't agree more. And with the rise of the Tea Party movement and Palin's political influence felt throughout this midterm election season, we can't think of a better time to purchase this book. ♦



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My Right Foot

Imagine, if you will, the moment when Ludwig van Beethoven realized his passion for music was being threatened by his growing deafness. Or when Magic Johnson saw his professional basketball career coming to a premature end because he was HIV positive. Or when it dawned on Franklin Roosevelt that his polio might hamper his ability to connect with the American people.

Something similar has happened to me. One of the things I enjoy about my job is the opportunity to write about food and drink. The one tiny obstacle, to which I've alluded in the past, is my high blood pressure. But thanks to the wonders of science, I can take a pill that keeps things under control without my having to drastically alter my diet.

Then last spring on a trip to New York with my wife, something else transpired. I began to feel a slight pressure at the base of the big toe on my right foot, which worsened with each step. When my father, a retired surgeon, examined it a few days later, it took him only a second to conclude I had the condition known as gout—the result of a buildup of sodium urate that crystallizes around a joint, occasionally the knee, usually the big toe, inflaming it. One cause is heredity—my father has had it on and off for years. Another cause is diet.

As Dr. Bryan Emmerson writes in *Getting Rid of Gout* (a book with a lovely cover photo of a grandfather fishing with his grandson), the disease has been around since ancient times. It seems Hippocrates noted a few characteristics of gout, such as that "eunuchs do not take the gout nor become bald; a woman does not take the gout unless her menses be stopped; a youth does not get gout before sexual intercourse"—all of which may or may not be true. And according to the findings of Roy Porter and G.S. Rousseau in their medical history *Gout: The Patrician Malady*, I happen to be in good company: "Historically seen as a disease afflicting upper-class males of superior wit, genius, and creativity, gout has included among its sufferers Erasmus, the Medici, Samuel Johnson, Immanuel Kant, and Robert Browning." (I'm afraid to ask how many of them were in their 30s when it first struck.)

MATT COLLINS

In any event, my father assured me all would be fine so long as I curtailed my eating of lobster, shrimp, liver, anchovies, sardines, and red meat. Not to mention my consumption of alcohol, particularly beer. But why stop there? I don't really have to write about food and drink. Instead, I could cover such scintillating issues as Social Security reform or the D.C. mayoral race, while eating a turkey sandwich with low-fat mayo on oat-nut toast with a glass of soy milk in my office.

I'm kidding. Beethoven certainly didn't stop composing symphonies. Magic Johnson, though retired from the game, is a successful businessman. And FDR, when told by his military advisers that a raid on Tokyo to avenge Pearl Harbor would be impossible, defiantly stood up on his own and said, "Do not tell me it can't be done!" (Okay, that last bit was actually Jon Voight playing FDR in the movie *Pearl Harbor*.)

Nevertheless, inspired by these gentlemen, I have decided to accept my fate as a gout-afflicted chronicler of food and drink. Luckily there are pills that fight gout—some sufferers who fit certain criteria can even take one daily as a preventative measure. My own acute attack subsided after a few days of medication, though it returned with a vengeance a month later. But as quickly as it struck, it vanished. No one really knows when gout will strike. It is a disease, as Dr. Emmerson puts it, "of remissions and exacerbations." Meaning every culinary journey is now fraught with peril.

A few days after my last gout attack, I was invited by the good folks at the Distilled Spirits Council to attend a "Spirits of France" cognac tasting at the French ambassador's residence, a chance to sip a glass or three of Richard Hennessy, which runs about $4,500 per bottle, and the $3,000 per bottle Courvoisier L'Essence proved irresistible. Two weeks later, I was tailing a French chef for a freelance profile that led to his feeding me practically to death. Mysteriously, the gout has not made its presence felt. One day it will.

In the meantime, I will continue to report fearlessly from the frontlines of restaurant kitchens and hillside vineyards. Truffle season is already upon us. And in December, a publicist tells me, the Japanese will be serving *shirako*. "Bring it on!" I say, before asking her what it is. "Cod sperm," she replies.

On second thought, I'll have to pass, what with my gout and all.

Victorino Matus

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The $2-1/2 Indian received little attention at the beginning of the 20th century, other then as a gift item in children's Christmass sockings. But after the cancelation of all gold coin production in 1933 the coin attracted of following due to the shortened series and unique incuse design. Also known as a Indian Quarter Eagle the 15-coin Indian set is popular with investors and collectors.

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- The lack of a raised edge caused these coins to wear out quickly and had to be replaced with new coins.
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the weekly Standard

Obama's Tax Evasion

The 2001 and 2003 tax cuts expire on January 1. President Obama wants to extend the current rates for households making less than $250,000, limiting the increase to the rich. Republicans say raising taxes in a weak economy is a mistake, full stop. And guess what, plenty of rank and file Democrats agree with them. Who says bipartisanship is dead?

In the House, a group of 31 Democrats is circulating a letter that asks Nancy Pelosi not to raise taxes. At least five Senate Democrats explicitly support extending current rates for all. Chances are they'll be joined by other members of their caucus as Election Day approaches. If all goes well—knock on wood—the rogue Democrats, together with a unified Republican party, may stop an Obama tax hike.

It's no accident that the number of Democrats who support an extension is growing. The case for extending all the current tax rates is economically and politically sound. We yield the balance of this paragraph to the senators from Connecticut and Nebraska. "The more money we leave in private hands, the quicker our recovery will be," Joe Lieberman told the Chamber of Commerce in Middlesex, Connecticut, last week. "Raising taxes in a weak economy could impair recovery," Ben Nelson said in a recent press release.

What's more, President Obama's arguments for the tax hike are unpersuasive. He says an extension would add to the deficit, wouldn't be fair, and wouldn't help the economy. The deficit argument is laughable. The cost of extending tax rates for the poor and middle class dwarfs the cost of extending them for the rich. A president serious about fiscal austerity would want all of the tax cuts to expire, or propose offsets in spending. Obama doesn't support either option. He isn't serious.

Obama isn't serious because he thinks fairness is more important than fiscal responsibility. What's fair? Obama says households making more than $250,000 don't deserve tax relief because the past decade has left them well off. He's the cop who's arrived to break up the rich people's party. But Obama never explains just how the gains at the upper end of the income distribution have hurt the rest of us. Maybe that's because he can't. The market is not a zero-sum game. Earning an additional dollar is not the equivalent of theft.

ASSOCIATED PRESS / JAE C. HONG

In the liberal imagination, our earnings are the government's by default, and the president and Congress determine through the tax code how much to give back to the people.

Obama objects to low taxes depriving the government of revenue. Leave aside the fact that economic growth sometimes results in more revenue under lower tax rates than higher ones, because higher rates lead to tax avoidance and diminished output. The larger question is: Whose money is it to begin with?

In the liberal imagination, the money is the government's by default, and the president and Congress determine through the tax code how much to give back to the people. Last week Obama told an audience in Virginia that an extension would be "giving them $100,000 for people making a million dollars or more." But this is backwards. Low taxes don't give away the government's money. Low taxes allow individuals to keep the money they've earned through hard work, sound investment, and good fortune.

Since Obama thinks the taxpayer's money is his in principle, he feels an obligation to redistribute the money to the best possible end. Thus the tax code becomes a tool for economic and social policy. Obama claims low taxes on the middle class encourage consumption, whereas low taxes on the rich encourage savings. As he put it last week at the White House, "middle-class folks are the folks who are most likely to actually spend this tax relief." And spending, in Obama's view, is the key to recovery. So, he favors one class of people over another in the pursuit of a public good.

But what if Obama's wrong? What if the key to recovery is aligning incentives in a way that promotes work, saving, and investment? In that case, wouldn't you want to allow taxpayers to keep the dollars they earn? Wouldn't you want

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to encourage people to earn more, rather than encourage dependence on government subsidies and transfers?

The president doesn't answer such questions, probably because doing so would lead him to admit that he's in error. The result is a tax policy that makes no sense. Obama wants fiscal responsibility along with deficit-financed tax cuts for most Americans. He wants fairness along with a tax code that discriminates between certain types of people and certain types of income. He wants economic recovery along with policies that discourage economic activity. Somebody alert the IRS. In all of this, Obama's guilty of a serious case of tax evasion.

—Matthew Continetti

Did You Get My Message?

House D.C. delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton left an interesting voicemail on a lobbyist's answering machine a couple of weeks ago:

> This is, uh, Eleanor Norton. Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton. Uh, I noticed that you have given to uh, other colleagues on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. I am a, um, senior member, a 20-year veteran and am chair of the subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management. I'm handling the largest economic development project in the United States now, the Homeland Security Compound of three buildings being built on the uh, old St. Elizabeth's hospital site in the District of Columbia along with uh, 15 other, uh, sites here for, that are part of the stimulus.
>
> I was, frankly, uh, uh, surprised to see that we don't have a record, so far as I can tell, of your having given to me despite my uh, long and deep uh, work. In fact, it's been my major work, uh, on the committee and subcommittee it's been essentially in your sector. I am, I'm simply candidly calling to ask for a contribution. As the senior member of the um, committee and a subcommittee chair, we have [chuckles] obligations to raise, uh funds. And, I think it must have been me who hasn't, frankly, uh, done my homework to ask for a contribution earlier. So I'm trying to make up for it by asking for one now, when we particularly, uh, need, uh contributions, particularly those of us who have the seniority and chairmanships and are in a position to raise the funds.
>
> I'm asking you to give to Citizens for Eleanor Holmes Norton, P.O. Box 70626, DC, 20024. I'll send you a follow-up note with appreciation for having heard me out. Thanks again.

Are you shocked? Probably not. If you've been paying attention, you know this is what politics in Washington, D.C., has come to. If you set up a casino of welfare statism, crony capitalism, and big government liberalism, this is what you're going to get.

But you should be shocked. We should all be shocked. This isn't the way American politics has to be. We can be hardheaded about the nature of politics (and human nature) and acknowledge that politics will always have its seamy side. But in the world of big government liberalism, the opportunities for seaminess multiply, and the constraints wither away.

That's why it's right that the very nature of big government liberalism is at the center of this year's election campaign. It's why Republican politicians and conservative activists shouldn't focus too much on the legal questions raised by this voicemail—it might, for instance, be an FEC violation to use information about other donations to solicit campaign funds ("I noticed that you have given to other colleagues on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee"), and it raises legal and House ethics questions for Norton to seem to be soliciting funds based on past actions taken in her official capacity in Congress ("my major work on the committee and subcommittee it's been essentially in your sector").

No. While Republican politicians and conservative activists can insist on a proper investigation of such legal issues, we would urge them not to focus too much on the personal ethical transgressions of Norton—or, for that matter, of Charlie Rangel. The point is not that there are individual bad apples in Congress, or that such bad apples might be disproportionately Democratic ones. The point is that this is what happens when you have crony capitalism and a big government welfare state. Tea Party activists already understand this. The Norton phone call is just more evidence for their broader point about how the current system works and why it has to be reformed.

So our advice to GOP candidates is this: Go ahead and play aloud the Eleanor Holmes Norton tape. But don't then waste time excoriating the D.C. delegate. Instead, ask your constituents whether this is the kind of government they want. Point out to them that low tax rates do not invite this kind of extortion, while earmarks and stimulus spending packages do. Turn the ethical issues of this Congress (and this administration) into fodder for a broad reform agenda of re-limiting government. Explain that only such an agenda can begin to drain the swamp.

Then get elected, refuse to play by the rules of the swamp, and systematically work to dismantle the policies and practices of big government, interest group, welfare state, crony capitalist liberalism.

—William Kristol

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Too Few Good Men

We could use more troops in Afghanistan.

BY GARY SCHMITT

U.S. Marines on patrol in Mian Poshteh, Afghanistan

JOE RAEDLE / GETTY IMAGES

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Michael Mullen, famously said in 2007 that "in Afghanistan, we do what we can. In Iraq, we do what we must." That strategic view was supposed to change when Barack Obama was elected president. It was candidate Obama, after all, who argued that the war in Iraq was the wrong war to be fighting, and a significant distraction from the far more important conflict in Afghanistan.

Accordingly, the new president announced in March 2009 that he would add to the 30,000 American forces already in theater another 21,000 troops, and then, rejecting Vice President Biden's advice to scale back the war effort, decided last December to add 30,000 more. The only real criticism from war supporters at the time focused on the president's scheduled July 2011 troop drawdown.

But there is also the equally important issue of whether the number of troops to be deployed is in fact enough to wage a successful counterinsurgency. And just as the commander of the International Security Assistance Force, as the troops fighting in Afghanistan are known, General David Petraeus, has suggested that next July's drawdown date might not be set in stone, it would also be useful to revisit the number of American troops committed to Afghanistan. After all, the 30,000 additional troops the president called for last December were less than the 40,000 recommended by Petraeus's predecessor, General Stanley McChrystal.

At the time, the president's team argued that our allies would make up the deficit. In December 2009, however, the number of non-American troops stood at 38,370, and as of June, the figure was up by less than 3,000. Even this limited increase, moreover, included few forces ready for frontline counterinsurgency duty. And since then, 1,500 Dutch combat soldiers have left Afghanistan, another 2,800 Canadian forces will be leaving in 2011, and the new government in London is already talking about beginning a drawdown as early as next year. The increased allied contribution—both in real numbers and actual combat capacity—is largely illusory.

Of course, just having enough "boots on the ground" does not guarantee a successful counterinsurgency. As the French discovered in Algeria and the Russians in Chechnya, troop levels alone are not enough to win an irregular war. But numbers matter. While it is important to have a sophisticated understanding of the "human terrain" of local customs, relations, and personalities, counterinsurgency campaigns require sufficient forces to clear and hold, and to do so for an extended period of time.

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Exactly how many troops are needed to conduct an effective counterinsurgency campaign has been the subject of a considerable amount of research over the last several years. Some studies focus on the ratio of counterinsurgent forces to insurgents, but since the center of gravity of a successful counterinsurgency campaign is in winning the hearts and minds of the civilian population, most research looks at force-to-civilian ratios. The number usually given is one counterinsurgent per 50 civilians, or 20 per 1,000—a ratio supported by recent history.

For peacekeeping and stabilization efforts in Bosnia and Kosovo, the force to population ratio was 19:1,000. More pertinently, the summer following President Bush's January 2007 decision to surge troops in Iraq, the ratio of combined security forces in Iraq (182,000 coalition forces, 278,000 Iraqi security forces and tens of thousands of the Sons of Iraq) to a population of 27.5 million was virtually dead on the 20:1,000 mark. By April 2009, the numbers were closer to 29:1,000.

In comparison, the ratio for Afghanistan at the end of 2009 was only 9:1,000. By the fall of 2010, American force levels will be just shy of 100,000. Combined with allied and partner-nation contributions of some 45,000 troops (many of which are noncombat), 134,000 Afghan soldiers and 109,000 Afghan national policemen (both still on a steep learning curve), the total number of security forces will be less than 390,000, or 280,000 troops short of meeting that 1:20 ratio for an Afghan population of about 33 million.

Afghanistan is a big place: approximately one and half times the size of Iraq with a population roughly the same size as Iraq's, but more dispersed. Accordingly, the game plan had been to narrow counterinsurgency efforts to a limited number of population centers and commercial routes, predominantly in the southern part of the country, accepting various levels of risk in adjacent areas and other regions. And narrow it is. For example, in the April report to Congress on the Afghan campaign, the Pentagon noted that ISAF had identified 80 "key terrain" districts, along with 41 other "area of interest" districts—out of nearly 400 total districts in the country. But, the "ISAF Joint Command (IJC) assessed that, out of the 121 districts, it had the resources to conduct operations in 48." And, as Michael O'Hanlon has recently written in *Foreign Affairs*, while the number of districts with "satisfactory" security has improved modestly over the past nine months, "ISAF currently estimates that only 35 percent of the priority districts have 'good' security or better."

That's a problem, even as it has been argued that the war against the Taliban is not a country-wide campaign, but is principally focused on the Pashtun belt in southern and eastern Afghanistan. Two recent incidents, however, suggest that the insurgency is not so easily contained. First was the slaughter of a Christian medical team in Badakhshan Province in the ostensibly quiet sector of northern Afghanistan, and then there was the public torture and murder of a pregnant widow in Badghis in northwestern Afghanistan. As Bill Roggio notes, "Just a few years ago, Badghis province wasn't considered a security problem. But over the past three years, the Taliban have slowly taken control of districts in Badghis and have implemented their brutal version of *sharia*." Although the strength of the Taliban and its allies still lies principally in the south and the east, their footprint, as General Petraeus acknowledges, has expanded outside those areas. Since 2005, the Taliban has tripled the number of its shadow governors, which gives the insurgents a presence in virtually every province. According to NATO's own data, by late 2009 the Taliban was a constant or periodic hostile presence in about half the country, with some capability in the remaining 40 percent.

There's also this: Obama has deployed fewer actual counterinsurgents in Afghanistan than Bush did in Iraq. Bush's surge included 21,500 soldiers and Marines ready for combat; the remaining additional forces consisted mainly of support elements, aviation units, and military police. In contrast, of Obama's 30,000 just over 15,000 are dedicated, ground-pounding counterinsurgents, with a higher percentage going to support and training. This problem isn't entirely of Obama's own making. By the time Bush ordered a troop increase, the supporting military infrastructure in Iraq had been well established, and there was less need to add more "tail" to support combat operations. This has not been so in Afghanistan, where the country's mountainous and varied geography and its isolated location demand more supporting elements in aviation and logistics.

Nor does this account for the bumps in the road that mark most military campaigns, such as last February's clearing operation in Marjah, a one-time Taliban stronghold in Helmand Province. With the Pentagon no doubt pressed to show results quickly and also not to tie down Marines who could be used in other clearing operations, it declared the town effectively cleared of the Taliban after two short weeks. But attempts to turn the town's security over to Afghan forces and special police in the weeks that followed only resulted in the resurgence of Taliban activity, whipsawing the townspeople in a way that means it will take even longer to assure them that they should bet on their long-term security resting with the Afghan government. Securing Helmand and Kandahar is probably going to require more time and more resources than the optimistic plans set out by General McChrystal. This awareness is reflected in General Petraeus's new guidelines specifying that ISAF forces will *gradually* step back from areas that have been pacified instead of trying to hand off the task to the still maturing Afghan forces all at once.

The shortage of trainers for the Afghan Army and the Afghan police complicates matters further, as does President Karzai's insistence on the reduction of private contractors performing security missions throughout the country. Add Pakistan's reluctance to deal decisively with the insurgent

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safe havens on its side of the border, and it is hard to escape the conclusion that more combat-ready troops are needed if we are to succeed in the Afghan mission.

In his *Foreign Affairs* article, O'Hanlon describes President Obama's decision last December to send additional troops to Afghanistan as his "attempt to have his cake and eat it, too." "Obama tried to be muscular enough to create a chance to win the war while at the same time keeping the war's critics acquiescent." But being too clever by half is no way to run a war. And the addition of a July 2011 timeline for the start of a drawdown only compounds the error. In the absence of some compelling necessity—which in this case does not exist—it is absurd to fix either hard deadlines or troop levels.

No one wants an open-ended commitment to Afghanistan. But from 2001 until now, both the United States and its allies have taken an economy of force approach. There were enough troops to topple the Taliban and then just enough to keep Afghanistan from reverting to Taliban control. There have never been enough forces, however, to defeat them and to stabilize the country. With the addition of 30,000 American troops, there will undoubtedly be progress. But it would be a strategic roll of the dice to expect to win this war by hoping we have "just enough" forces to carry out the campaign successfully.

It is difficult to say with precision what the number of additional troops should be. That would require familiarity with in-theater intelligence about the enemy as well as a realistic assessment of the rate at which Afghan troops and police will become self-sufficient. But as a start, we might revisit General McChrystal's assessment that 40,000 more troops were needed—not the 30,000 that were sent and have only just fully arrived. Adding three Army combat brigades, some 10,000 troops, would give commanders more flexibility to act with the kind of resoluteness that marked the surge in Iraq in 2007 and that allowed it to succeed. ♦

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A New Contract with America?

It won't matter much in November, but it could help afterwards. BY JAY COST

Newt Gingrich addressing GOP congressional candidates, September 1994

With the midterm elections less than two months away, the prospects for a Republican takeover of the House of Representatives are very good. But could they be better? Shouldn't the party put forward a positive agenda, akin to 1994's Contract with America, if it wants to repeat the sweeping victories it enjoyed that year?

Probably not. But there is still a strong case to be made for a new contract.

The Contract with America was unique in the history of electioneering—a written, concise statement signed by more than 300 party candidates that outlined a 10-point reform agenda. Nothing like that has happened before or since, and yet one party or another has been winning blowout elections periodically for nearly 200 years. In fact, opposition parties tend to be downright ambiguous about their plans, intentionally so. When the electorate is inclined to vote for you, it can be risky to give it something specific, as the details might actually alienate some swing voters. There is no better example of such strategic ambiguity than Franklin Roosevelt's 1932 campaign, which was full of vague and even conflicting promises. Yet that did not stop him from trouncing Herbert Hoover and bringing more than 300 House Democrats into office on his coattails.

Generally speaking, midterm congressional elections hinge on evaluations of the president. If voters think he is doing a bad job, they are going to be heavily predisposed to the opposition, which will thus enjoy a low threshold for victory. Oftentimes, it is sufficient for the opposition to say nothing more than, "Vote for us because we'll oppose the president."

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The 1994 midterm was no exception. That year, the exit polls indicated that 80 percent of all voters who disapproved of President Clinton voted Republican while 80 percent of all voters who approved of him voted Democratic. In other words, 1994, like most midterms, came down to the president, not anything the GOP did.

This assertion might come as a bit of a surprise. After all, that election shocked just about everybody when it happened. Few pundits expected the GOP to pick up enough seats to win the House, let alone the 52 the Republicans actually did win. What's more, political science models of electoral outcomes were quite wide of the mark that year. So doesn't this unprecedented outcome require some unprecedented cause, like the Contract with America?

Not really. In retrospect, the "Republican Revolution" has come to look quite typical. The 1994 midterms resulted in 150 Republican-held seats in the north and west. By historical standards, this was consistent with previous good Republican cycles, like 1966 and 1980. The position of Clinton in 1994 was indeed similar to that of Lyndon Johnson in 1966 and Jimmy Carter in 1980 in that all three were under 50 percent job approval and had high disapproval ratings. So it's no surprise that, in the north and west, the GOP would bounce back to that level.

But the GOP won more seats nationwide in 1994 than in 1966 and 1980, thanks to unprecedented gains in the south. Republicans won just 23 southern seats in 1966 and 39 seats in 1980, but in 1994 they pulled in a whopping 64 southern seats, which gave the party a regional majority for the first time since 1874. It's possible that the Contract with America had something to do with the GOP's smashing success in the south, but 1994 has since turned out to be a step along the way in a decades-long march toward Republican dominance of Dixie, so that by 2004 the GOP would take better than three-fifths of all southern House seats. Even in the Republican defeat in 2006, the GOP still won more southern seats than it did after the 1994 midterm.

In other words, we do not really need the Contract with America to explain the 1994 midterm. Instead, most of the results can be accounted for by combining a typical wave election in the north and west with the ongoing southern realignment.

Beyond that, the substance of the Contract with America suggests that it probably did not pack much of an electoral punch. After all, the contract was not so much a break with the Republican past as it was an updating of the core GOP message: a balanced budget, pro-growth and pro-family tax cuts, welfare and entitlement reform, tough crime laws, and tort reform. The core philosophy behind the contract's specific proposals has connected Republicans dating back to William McKinley in 1896. The only twist on the Republican message was a call for reforms of the governing process—items like term limits, the end of budgetary gimmicks, and open committee hearings. Generally speaking, voters were not learning anything new about the Republican party from the contract so much as they were being reminded of why they had backed the GOP in years past.

Yet even though the contract probably had just a marginal effect on the November elections, it still had value. It was a blueprint for the Republicans in Congress, a straightforward plan of action that gave the GOP majority meaning and purpose. The real worth of the contract was in governing, not electioneering.

The authors of the Federalist Papers predicted that Congress would drive the political process—but Hamilton, Madison, and Jay never counted on the invention of television. The presidency has an extraordinary advantage in this day and age because a single human being occupies it, and he can communicate to the mass public in a clear and direct fashion. Congress cannot speak to the nation like this because it consists of 535 different, often conflicting, voices. And so, even though the Constitution vests in Congress almost all of the powers over domestic life, the occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue is the "leader" of the nation.

But not in 1995. That year, Bill Clinton had to hold a press conference to defend his relevance. That year, perhaps for the first time since the administration of the hapless Andrew Johnson, Congress and not the president dominated the political landscape. For that, Republicans can thank the Contract with America. It unified the congressional GOP, and thus empowered Newt Gingrich to speak on behalf of the congressional majority in a way that none of his predecessors ever really could. This dramatically cut down on the institutional advantages President Clinton enjoyed. For a time, Gingrich was every bit Clinton's rival, requesting and receiving prime time on CBS in the spring of 1995 to address the American people. It was not until the budget battle of 1995-96 that the president was able to regain control over the national conversation.

This suggests that there could be value in a new Contract with America for 2010. It probably will not help win the Republicans any additional seats in November, but it might help the party sustain its momentum coming out of the midterm. The formal powers of the American presidency are paltry, especially when it comes to domestic reforms. Yet the office's informal powers are awesome, vastly outstripping those of the Congress. Republicans should expect Obama to use every advantage he has, and they need to be ready.

To counter the president effectively, congressional Republicans will have to stick together. They will need to unite and stay united so that House speaker John Boehner will have the authority to articulate the will of the House majority, just as Speaker Gingrich once did. That is perhaps the only way to counter the advantage President Obama enjoys simply by virtue of being the president. To that end, a second Contract with America, one that articulates a legislative program that all Republicans can proudly get behind, would be an asset to the Grand Old Party. ♦

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Al Qaeda in Iraq

What Tony Blair knows (and Barack Obama doesn't).

BY THOMAS JOSCELYN

In a campaign speech on July 14, 2007, Senator Barack Obama railed against the Iraq war and President Bush's obstinate refusal to end it. "We cannot win a war against the terrorists if we're on the wrong battlefield," Obama said. In another speech a few weeks later, he said, "The president would have us believe that every bomb in Baghdad is part of al Qaeda's war against us, not an Iraqi civil war. He elevates Al Qaeda in Iraq—which didn't exist before our invasion—and overlooks the people who hit us on 9/11, who are training new recruits in Pakistan."

Tony Blair

Obama's argument was by no means unique. It was fashionable at the time to claim that Iraq was in the midst of a "civil war" and, therefore, a surge of American troops (which Obama opposed) would unnecessarily place American lives at risk. Obama's major rivals in the 2008 presidential campaign, including Senator Hillary Clinton, made similar arguments.

The claim that Al Qaeda in Iraq "didn't exist before our invasion" was not Obama's alone, either. Through two presidential elections (2004 and 2008) and countless debates about the war, the Democrats and their surrogates have made this allegation repeatedly. It is flat wrong.

The latest account to contradict the Democrats' talking points is that of former British prime minister Tony Blair. In his new autobiography, *A Journey: My Political Life*, Blair is unapologetic about the decision to topple Saddam's regime. But he is understandably disturbed by the violence that followed.

"I can't regret the decision to go to war for the reason I will give," Blair writes. "I can say that never did I guess the nightmare that unfolded, and that too is part of the responsibility." The "nightmare" is the Iraqi insurgency, which Blair rightly blames on al Qaeda (and Iran).

To be sure, Blair does not contend that Saddam's ties to al Qaeda made regime change necessary. "[T]he assessment of the threat was not based on Saddam's active sponsorship of terrorism or terrorist groups," he writes. As Blair sees it, Saddam's Iraq was not "the same threat as Afghanistan" because there was no direct connection between Iraq and the September 11 attacks. In addition, British intelligence officials thought the link between Saddam and al Qaeda was "hazy."

Naysayers will undoubtedly seize upon these passages as further proof that Saddam's Iraq had nothing to do with al Qaeda. But contrary to Obama and the Democrats, Blair also says "there was strong intelligence that al Qaeda were allowed into Iraq by Saddam in mid-2002 (with severe consequences later)."

Blair elaborates:

> There is an interesting sidebar to this. It later emerged that [Abu Musab] al-Zarqawi, the deputy to bin Laden, had come to Iraq in May 2002, had had meetings with senior Iraqis and established a presence there in October 2002. This intelligence has not been withdrawn, by the way. Probably we should have paid more attention to its significance, but we were so keen not to make a false claim about al Qaeda and Saddam that we somewhat understated it, at least on the British side.

Blair's testimony directly contradicts the Democrats. Still, in the British manner, he continues to understate the case.

Intelligence compiled by American officials, as well as the testimony of known al Qaeda associates, confirms that al Qaeda established a significant presence in Iraq prior to March 2003. The evidence that al Qaeda was in Iraq before the war is simply overwhelming. And it helps to explain why the insurgency became so lethal.

Even though Blair says it "later emerged" that Zarqawi had set up shop in Iraq in 2002, this connection was actually a formal part of the American case for war. Secretary of State Colin Powell included a section on Zarqawi's network in Iraq in his February 5, 2003, presentation before the United Nations.

Former CIA director George Tenet reveals in his own autobiography, *At the Center of the Storm*, some of the intelligence that backed up Powell's presentation. More than one dozen other al Qaeda terrorists had joined Zarqawi in Baghdad. One of them was an Egyptian known as Abu Ayyub al Masri, who had served Osama bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al Zawahiri, since the 1980s. After Zarqawi was killed in 2006, al Masri took his place as the leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq. Al Masri himself was killed earlier this year, and his widow confirmed that they had moved to central Baghdad in 2002.

Zarqawi and al Masri led a campaign of spectacular terrorist attacks against the Iraqi people, security personnel, and coalition forces. It was their savagery that, to a large extent, brought Iraq to the brink of total chaos—and ultimately provoked the Anbar Awakening. It is crucially important, then, that Zarqawi and al Masri were operating inside Iraq before American or British forces ever set foot there. They were clearly preparing for war.

In Baghdad, Tenet says, Zarqawi's cell found "a comfortable and secure

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environment" to funnel supplies and fighters to "up to two hundred" al Qaeda fighters who had relocated to camps in the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq beginning in late 2001. The camps were run by an al Qaeda affiliate named Ansar al Islam (AI), which would later play a significant role in the Iraqi insurgency. The CIA found that AI was experimenting with poisons on animals and, "in at least one case, on one of their own associates."

Prior to the war, the CIA got much about Iraq wrong. But here is an instance where the agency got something right.

Less than one week after Secretary of State Colin Powell made the case for war with Saddam's Iraq based on the CIA's intelligence, Osama bin Laden decided to make his own case for war. Bin Laden, however, was on Saddam's side.

In an audiotape released on February 11, 2003, bin Laden explained why. "It is true that Saddam is a thief and an apostate, but the solution is not to be found in moving the government of Iraq from a local thief to a foreign one," bin Laden argued. "There is no harm in such circumstances if the Muslims' interests coincide with those of the socialists in fighting the Crusaders, despite our firm conviction that they are infidels. . . . There is nothing wrong with a convergence of interests here."

Bin Laden's message was clear. Saddam may be a socialist "infidel," but he is preferable to the United States and Britain. The terror master called on Muslims to fight alongside Saddam's forces. And Saddam himself clearly saw a "convergence of interests" as well.

In an interview with Agence France-Presse in 2004, Hudayfa Azzam said that Saddam had welcomed al Qaeda "with open arms" and "strictly and directly" controlled their activities inside Iraq. Azzam was in a position to know. He is the son of one of al Qaeda's earliest and most influential leaders, Abdullah Azzam, and maintained extensive contacts with al Qaeda leaders inside Iraq.

Muhammad al Masari, a Saudi who operates a known al Qaeda front in London and has helped recruit suicide bombers to fight in Iraq, has offered a similar account. In his book *The Secret History of al Qaeda*, Abdel Bari Atwan recounts a conversation he had with al Masari. Saddam "saw that Islam would be key to the formation of a cohesive resistance in the event of invasion," according to al Masari. Thus, Saddam funded the relocation of al Qaeda operatives to Iraqi soil. Al Masari says that Saddam also ordered officers in the Iraqi military to purchase "small plots of land from . . . farmers in Sunni areas" and then bury "arms and money caches for later use by the resistance."

There is much more evidence in this vein, including, for instance, Iraqi intelligence documents recovered after the fall of Saddam. Some of the documents demonstrate that Saddam called on hundreds of terrorists from around the Middle East to come to Iraq in the months leading

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up to the war. Many of them had been trained by Saddam's regime beginning in the late 1990s. In early 2003, Saddam opened his border with Syria to allow this stream of terrorists in. In one recovered document, Saddam ordered his military to "utilize" Arab suicide bombers against the invading forces. This was almost certainly a reference to al Qaeda.

All of this may sound like a belated attempt to relitigate the case for war. It is not. Reasonable people can differ on how to handle Saddam's prewar sponsorship of terrorists, including al Qaeda. Tony Blair does not present Saddam's terrorist ties as a major justification for war. By the same token, it is simply false to claim, as Obama and the Democrats have, that Al Qaeda in Iraq "didn't exist before our invasion."

More important, the Democrats' politically convenient antiwar arguments have obscured a deeper truth. The war for Iraq was clearly part of the broader war against al Qaeda. Saddam's regime and al Qaeda made it so. This is undoubtedly what Blair meant when he wrote that Saddam's decision to host al Qaeda inside Iraq had "severe consequences" and that Britain and the United States probably "should have paid more attention" to this intelligence.

In the end, Blair laments the fact that he did not do more to connect the struggle for Iraq with the broader war against Islamic extremism. Indeed, the Democrats still pretend that Iraq was a distraction.

When President Obama announced the end of combat operations in Iraq on August 31, he referred to al Qaeda's presence in Iraq only in passing. Obama argued that "because of our drawdown in Iraq, we are now able to apply the resources necessary to go on offense." The implication was that the war in Iraq was the "wrong battlefield."

That is not how Blair sees it. Al Qaeda and "militant Islam" were the source of the "mess" inside Iraq. These were the same forces "we were fighting everywhere," Blair writes. "Fighting them in Iraq was not therefore a diversion from the real battle. It had become part of it." ♦

Taxless in Seattle?

Washington State votes on an income-tax referendum. BY ETHAN EPSTEIN

Camas, Washington

Readers of *Fortune* magazine opened the September 6 issue to find a glossy eight-page insert advertising business opportunities in Washington state. In addition to the state's proximity to Asia, its strength in the technology sector, and its inexpensive electricity, the ad stressed another factor that makes Washington an attractive place to do business: its lack of an income tax. Yet a referendum this Election Day could change all that.

Initiative 1098, as it's known, would see Washington surrender its distinction as one of only seven states without an income tax. It would tax gross income above $200,000 for single earners, and $400,000 for joint filers, at a rate of 5 percent. Gross income above $500,000 for singles and $1 million for joint filers would be taxed at 9 percent. The state estimates that the initiative, which includes a modest reduction in property and business and operating taxes, would raise $11 billion over the next five years. Not coincidentally, Washington's state government is projected to run a $3 billion deficit this year.

In spite of the state government's predilection for writing in red ink, Washington has fared relatively well in the great recession. Major corporations like Microsoft, Boeing, and Intel have a big presence here and drive job growth. The unemployment rate is 8.9 percent—hardly ideal, but below the national average (and far below the 12.3 percent in nearby California). Per capita income is ranked 13th in the country and is considerably higher than in the neighboring states of Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. Democratic governor Chris Gregoire uses the state's lack of an income tax as part of her pitch to businesses considering setting up shop here.

Washington state has traditionally been steadfast in its opposition to income taxes. A 1933 state supreme court ruling classified income as a form of property. Because the state constitution mandates that property be taxed uniformly, the legislature has been prevented from imposing a graduated income tax. (The state supreme court has nullified numerous income tax provisions since the thirties.) Furthermore, Washington voters have rejected constitutional changes to allow for an income tax eight times. In order to circumvent the state's prohibition on income taxes, Initiative 1098 speaks of an "excise tax on income." Should it pass, this slippery wording is sure to spark yet another court fight.

Initiative 1098 is being promoted as a tax on the "rich"—an income tax for "only the wealthiest 1.2 percent," as the promoters' television ad puts it. Yet opponents argue that 1098 is predicated on a false premise. They say it would harm far more than a narrow and extremely wealthy subset of the population.

Opponents argue that 1098 would do great damage to Washington businesses. Many small businesses report their revenue as income, which would be subject to the new tax. Mike Sotelo and Craig Dawson, leaders in the Washington business community, point out that "almost 70 percent of those earning $200,000—where the income tax first kicks in—are small business owners."

Don Brunell, the head of the Association of Washington Business, whose 7,000 members range from Boeing and Microsoft to the corner cafe and muffler shop, is a leading voice against the

Ethan Epstein is a writer in Portland, Oregon.

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initiative, for the same reason: "This is not a tax on wealthy people. It's a tax on small business." Brunell estimates that virtually every business with more than five employees would be negatively affected. People worry that towns like picturesque Camas on the Columbia River, which thrives on a mix of manufacturing, services, and retail, would be hit hard by the new tax.

Supporters of the measure rightly point out that Washington has a woefully regressive tax structure. A recent study from the Institute For Taxation and Economic Policy found that residents earning less than $20,000 a year lose a whopping 17.3 percent of their income to state taxes. Yet 1098 does nothing to alleviate Washington's high sales tax, the main culprit in this regressive structure. While 1098 does include a modest reduction in state property tax rates, moreover, Brunell notes that, "because the lion's share of property taxes are local, the average tax bill would only go down about 4 percent."

Opponents also worry about "taxation creep." The initiative's supporters assure Washingtonians that should the measure pass, income tax rates would remain at 5 percent and 9 percent and affect only those with incomes over $200,000. Yet, two years after the new tax took effect, the legislature would be empowered to expand the income tax by a simple majority vote. People look to Connecticut, the most recent state to impose an income tax, and see cause for concern. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported last month, since the Nutmeg State introduced an income tax in 1991, the top rate has climbed from 4.5 percent to 6.5 percent. The same thing could happen in Washington.

A 1933 court ruling classified income as property in Washington State. Because the constitution mandates that property be taxed uniformly, the legislature has been prevented from imposing a graduated income tax.

Some big names—with big bank accounts—are bankrolling the effort to impose the tax. Bill Gates Sr., the father of America's richest man, is spearheading the initiative, and he's already donated half a million dollars to the cause. The SEIU, with its deep pockets, is also backing the effort. But the other side has financial muscle as well: Seattle venture capitalists like Tom Alberg and Jon Runstad have written $25,000 checks to defeat the measure, and other business leaders are pledging "No On 1098" money as well.

The fight is already fierce. The most recent poll, taken in early August, found a dead heat, with both sides garnering 41 percent support. As money continues pouring into both camps, neither has an easy path to victory. ♦

Extend Tax Relief to Revive the Economy

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

The remainder of the 111th Congress will be largely defined by one issue: taxes. With the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts set to expire at the end of the year, Americans are facing the largest tax hike in history. If Congress acts to prevent these tax increases, the economy will receive a much-needed injection of certainty. But if Congress lets tax relief lapse, 2011 will be another difficult year for American families and businesses.

Let's examine the implications of this pending tax hike. Marginal income tax rates will increase for every taxpayer. The capital gains tax rate will climb 33%. Dividend rates for stockholders will jump by as much as 164%. The child tax credit will be cut in half, and the marriage penalty will return.

Small businesses—our job creators—will be among those hardest hit by these tax increases. The top marginal income tax rate will grow to 39.6% from 35%. Compound that with the loss of certain itemized deductions and personal exemptions, and small businesses will face rates as high as 41.6%. Successful small businesses will be hit particularly hard—approximately half of the business income reported on tax returns in 2011 will be subject to the top two marginal rates.

For companies that employ Americans and keep our economy moving, raising dividend rates could discourage investment. Further, it could incentivize companies to use excessive debt financing, causing greater economic instability. All taxpayers who receive dividends, regardless of income level, could be hurt by potential lower dividend payouts.

Our economy is stumbling on the road to recovery. Nearly 1 in 10 Americans can't find work. If you include those who have given up looking or have settled for part-time work, that number jumps to nearly 1 in 5.

Things are bad, but if taxes go up they could get much worse.

Congress must act now to prevent this tax increase. By preserving current rates, lawmakers would boost investor, business, and consumer confidence by removing growth-killing uncertainty from tax policy. With more of their earnings available—and a better sense of what the future will bring—businesses and individuals will be able to make the purchases and investments that drive economic growth and create jobs.

If Congress does only one more thing before it adjourns this year, it must extend the tax relief passed in 2001 and 2003. By giving the business community tax certainty, Washington would be casting a vote of confidence for the economic prospects of the nation.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Comment at www.chamberpost.com.

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GOP Nor'easter

Republicans storm Pennsylvania and beyond.

BY FRED BARNES

Langhorne, Pennsylvania

The wipeout of House Republicans from the Northeast reached Bucks County in 2006. The victim was Michael Fitzpatrick, defeated after a single term in the wave that gave Democrats control of the House and Senate. A money advantage, long experience in county politics, and personal popularity couldn'ta save him. He lost to Democrat Patrick Murphy, a newcomer to the district.

The campaign was brutal. Both President Bush and the Iraq war were deeply unpopular. "The intensity I ran against in 2006 was … irrational," Fitzpatrick told me, struggling for the right word. At the top of the ticket, Republican senator Rick Santorum lost the district by 18 percentage points. The Republican candidate for governor, ex-Pittsburgh Steelers wide receiver Lynn Swann, lost by 20 points.

Fitzpatrick, unlike many defeated members of Congress, didn't stay in Washington as a lobbyist. "I'm a Bucks County guy," he says. He has six children, two in college. He returned to his law practice in Langhorne and didn't consider running in 2008. He was being treated for colon cancer with chemotherapy and radiation. Murphy was reelected easily as the second wave of the Democratic juggernaut hit.

Now Fitzpatrick, 47, is running again. His cancer, he says, is cured, and he's eager to be part of a Republican recovery in the Northeast. In one of the political surprises of 2010, Republicans have an excellent chance of winning as many as a dozen House seats in a region—New England, plus New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania—that was considered a dead zone for them for decades to come.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

The conventional wisdom, after 2008, was that the Republican party was too conservative, too Southern-oriented, and too obsessed with social issues like abortion and gay rights to compete in the Northeast. Though this analysis was (and is) dubious, the election results in House races did suggest a barren future for Republicans.

After two disastrous election cycles, Republicans had lost 5 of their 12 House seats in Pennsylvania, 6 of 9 in New York, all 3 in Connecticut, both seats in New Hampshire, and 1 of 6 in New Jersey. They have zero House seats in New England. That's a wipeout, for sure. Until this year—really until midsummer—a Republican resurgence was unthinkable.

It wasn't until January that the Cook Political Report downgraded the Bucks County district from "Solid D" to "Likely D." The reason, Cook said, is that Fitzpatrick "makes this district a new concern for Democrats." Now it's a critical concern. In August, Cook called the race a tossup. Noting that Murphy beat Fitzpatrick by just 1,518 votes in 2006—half a percentage point of the total vote—Cook declared, "It's hard to see how four years in Washington gets [Murphy] in a much better position for a rematch in this kind of political environment."

The change in the political climate has permeated the Northeast. President Obama's job approval hasn't nosedived, but his policies on health care and the economy are almost as poisonous for Democrats here as elsewhere. In a Rasmussen poll in September, Obama's approval rating in New York was 61 percent favorable, 38 percent not. But by 56 percent to 42 percent, likely voters in New York favor repeal of Obamacare. In New Jersey and all of New England, the same phenomenon exists.

The expectation of a Republican comeback stems from two other factors. Most of the seats Republicans are poised to win have historically been held by Republicans or have at least been receptive. One example: the eastern Long Island district in New York, where Republicans have an advantage over Democrats in voter registration of 12,800 and their frequent ally, the state's Conservative party, has more registered voters than in any other district.

The Republican challenger is businessman Randy Altschuler, 40, who defeated Richard Nixon's grandson Chris Cox and lawyer George Demos in a grueling primary in the district. Altschuler is focused solely on the economy and jobs—issues that unite Republicans, conservative Democrats, and independents in the Northeast. Those issues are the second factor aiding Republicans. "My top priority is to create a pro-growth environment, lower taxes, and more jobs," Altschuler says in a TV ad. "This should be our district," he told me, "particularly in a year like this."

It not only should be, but it must be if Republicans are to gain the 39 seats they need nationally to capture the House. With 10 or 12 pickups in the Northeast, a majority would be assured. In New York, Republicans are almost certain of winning 3 or 4 seats and may net as many as 7. More likely than not, they'll win both New Hampshire seats. They have an even chance of gaining one seat in New Jersey and another in Connecticut.

But Pennsylvania is the biggest potential prize. Cook lists 5 seats held by Democrats as tossups and another as "leans D." The election model of analyst Nate Silver gives Republicans a better than 50 percent chance of winning 6 Democratic seats. This includes a 69 percent chance of taking the Scranton seat represented since 1984 by Democratic warhorse Paul Kanjorski. Fitzpatrick has a 54 percent chance of ousting Murphy, according to Silver.

Pennsylvania has trended Democratic since 2000, but it has reacted more negatively to Obama and his agenda than the rest of the Northeast. The president's approval is under water in Pennsylvania (51 percent negative to

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47 percent positive in the Rasmussen poll). Repeal of his health care bill is favored by 56 percent to 38 percent.

The collapse of support for Obama is duplicated in Pennsylvania's 8th District, which takes in all of Bucks County and a small chunk of northeast Philadelphia. The county, just north of Philadelphia, is urban in the south, suburban in the middle, and rural in the north. Fitzpatrick grew up in Levittown, the gigantic postwar development of modestly priced houses, and still lives there.

In private polling, Obama's approval in the district has flipped from 55 percent to 42 percent positive a year ago to 53 percent to 43 percent negative now. Last month, a private survey gave Fitzpatrick a 48 percent to 41 percent lead over Murphy.

Fitzpatrick is hardly coasting. As the incumbent, Murphy will raise and spend more, just as Fitzpatrick did in 2006 when he was running for reelection. Fitzpatrick has already raised more than $1 million and figures he needs $1 million more to run an effective campaign. "In this atmosphere, we're not going to have to spend as much as the incumbent," Fitzpatrick says.

In 2010, money matters less than issues, and that's where Fitzpatrick—and Republicans in much of the Northeast—has an advantage. "Congressman Murphy would like to make [the election] about social issues," Fitzpatrick, a pro-life Catholic, says. "But all the other issues have been trumped by the economy."

Murphy voted for the liberal trinity of unpopular measures—economic stimulus, cap and trade, and health care. "We're going to make him defend everything," Fitzpatrick says. His plan to revive the economy and create jobs is standard Republican fare: "smaller, more efficient government, less spending, lower taxes, and setting the table for small businesses and manufacturers."

The importance of Fitzpatrick's candidacy is a given among Republican strategists, though he's gotten little outside help so far. "It'd be difficult to get a majority without winning this district," he says. Winning is hardly certain. But a betting man would back Fitzpatrick. ♦

Truth, Justice, or the Obama Way

The Justice Department is forced to investigate itself.

BY JENNIFER RUBIN

It is about to get harder for both the Obama administration and the mainstream media to downplay the New Black Panther party scandal.

The mainstream media did their best to ignore this blatant case of voter intimidation by two New Black Panther party members at a Philadelphia polling place on Election Day 2008. Though the threatening behavior was captured on videotape, Obama political appointees dismissed the case on the eve of a default judgment. When in early June a key trial team member, Justice Department attorney J. Christian Adams, resigned and then testified before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the media grudgingly reported on his testimony.

But, despite Adams's testimony that the case was indicative of a widespread aversion in the Voting Section to colorblind enforcement of the civil rights laws, the media framed the story as an isolated case unworthy of continuing coverage. After all, just one witness was claiming that this was the mindset in the Justice Department. And besides, the head of the Civil Rights Division, Thomas Perez, had testified before both Congress and the commission that the case was legally and factually defective. He had also insisted there was no opposition in the department to enforcing civil rights laws against minority defendants.

In fact, there is ample evidence, including Justice Department emails obtained by THE WEEKLY STANDARD, that Perez testified untruthfully. There is every reason to believe, moreover, that if allowed to testify, several other Justice Department attorneys would substantiate Adams's allegations and contradict Perez's sworn testimony. Not to mention that the department itself acknowledged last week that the matter of biased enforcement of voting laws requires investigation.

Jennifer Rubin is Commentary *magazine's contributing editor.*

Until now, the Justice Department has refused to allow its lawyers to testify. On April 21, Jody Hunt, director of federal programs, whose office oversees the department's dealings with other branches of government, emailed Adams's attorney. Hunt explained:

> On behalf of the Department of Justice, I have communicated to the Commission that your client has not been authorized to give testimony at the hearing. Indeed, as I understand it, your client has not been scheduled by the Commission to provide testimony at the hearing. The Commission has accepted the Department's offer to hear testimony from Tom Perez, the Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division, at a separate hearing to be scheduled in May.

Department sources say that members of the trial team objected strongly and raised their objections with Hunt in writing. On May 11, for example, Adams emailed Hunt. He challenged the basis for the department's refusal to allow his testimony, referring to his attorney's legal citations. He then implored the department to change its position:

> I would ask you to reconsider this decision and authorize at least one

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of the individuals who had factual and legal familiarity with the case to provide information to the Commission, whether me, former Voting Section Chief Christopher Coates, Deputy Chief Robert Popper, Attorney Spencer Fisher, or all four of us.

Adams specifically warned Hunt of the danger to the department in allowing an attorney unfamiliar with the New Black Panther party case, Perez, to testify instead of the attorneys who had the most direct knowledge of the case:

> The first reason that the decision should be reconsidered is that there is the risk that inaccurate statements will be made about the case. I do not suggest that the scheduled witness will knowingly make false statements. Rather, my concern is that the scheduled witness did not participate in the case whatsoever, and will instead rely on characterizations of the facts and law provided by other Department employees, which I have reason to believe may be wildly inaccurate at best. Over the last several months, unattributed statements about the case by Department officials have been cited in media reports that are demonstrably false. Because the statements are never attributed, it is impossible to know whether these are people entirely unfamiliar with the matter, or are individuals upon whom the scheduled witness will rely. If the latter, there is a genuine risk that the scheduled witness will unknowingly provide inaccurate and incorrect testimony about the case. This could result in an extremely embarrassing situation for both the witness and the Department. . . . If the scheduled witness were to testify that there was no evidence, or insufficient or inadmissible evidence, to support agency liability [the legal theory for holding the New Black Panther Party and its head responsible], such testimony could prove to be grossly inaccurate.

He also warned Hunt:

> Commanding our silence has created an inference that the attorneys who brought the case pursed a meritless action. Indeed, any future statements that the case did not have factual and legal merit would reinforce this false inference. For example, there was testimony to the House Judiciary Committee [by Perez] that "Rule 11 [prohibiting frivolous actions] required" the dismissal of the action. Not only is this statement inaccurate, but it also calls into question the ethics of the attorneys who approved and brought the case. I can attest that my three colleagues were thoughtful, diligent, hard working, and beyond reproach throughout this case. Their experience with the Voting Rights Act is unmatched in any other part of the Department. Indeed, I would submit Christopher Coates and Robert Popper have far more experience in litigating voting law combined than just about any pair of Department attorneys you could produce.

To put it bluntly, Adams was warning the Department that Perez had already testified inaccurately before Congress and that allowing him to do so again would be an intentional attempt to mislead the civil rights commission.

Shortly thereafter Adams received a call from the Voting Section head, Chris Herren. Herren said he understood Adams wanted to meet with Perez. Adams said he had not asked for a meeting. Herren repeated, "You said you wanted to meet with Perez." Adams reiterated that he had not. It became obvious, however, that Perez wanted to meet with him.

Hunt arranged a meeting on Tuesday, May 12, three days before Perez was to testify before the civil rights commission. Adams, Popper, Perez, Hunt, and two other department attorneys met in the 5th floor conference room in the Main Justice Department building. Coates joined them by speaker phone.

Coates, Popper, and Adams spoke for approximately 45 minutes. Coates informed Perez that the case had been dismissed because of hostility to equal enforcement of the civil rights laws. Popper went next, explaining how solid the case was. He became animated and lashed out at Perez for testifying that the attorneys had violated Rule 11—that is, committed an ethical violation. Adams spoke last, making the case that the 14th Amendment required equal enforcement of the civil rights laws and that it was dangerous for the department and the country to go down the road of unequal enforcement of the law.

During the meeting Perez said nothing. Was he taking the information to heart so he could investigate the serious allegations or simply, like an attorney in an explosive case, taking the deposition of the most powerful witnesses to see how effective they were and what damage they could do?

The answer became clear that Friday when Perez testified before the civil rights commission. He reiterated his view that the case was legally and factually deficient. Perhaps wary of Popper's reaction, he avoided restating that the trial team had acted contrary to Rule 11.

Perez then testified under oath that the department had no attorneys opposed to the equal enforcement of the voting rights law. "We don't have people that are of that ilk, sir," he said in response to the questioning of commissioner Todd Gaziano. This was a blatant misstatement, as Coates and Adams had told him three days before. There was also this exchange:

> Commissioner Gaziano: If someone came to you and said that someone—someone in your Division, I should say, came to you and said, "A supervising attorney" or "a political appointee" made the statement that the voting rights laws should never be enforced against blacks or other racial minorities, you would investigate that report, wouldn't you?
> Asst. Atty Gen. Perez: I would take a look at the person who made the statement. I would take a look at the statement. And we would have a conversation about it.
> Commissioner Gaziano: You would want to interview the people who were supposedly present when that statement was made, wouldn't you?
> Asst. Atty Gen. Perez: Yes, sir.

But Perez conducted no investigation after being briefed by not one, but three attorneys.

Gaziano told me, "Perez's refusal to give me a straight answer to many of my questions suggested he might be trying to hide something. If there

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is evidence that he knew of statements or actions in his division demonstrating hostility to the race-neutral enforcement of the civil rights laws before he testified, that would be very troubling. If so, his testimony would be misleading at best, instead of simply uninformed."

Then suddenly last week, months after Perez's testimony, the inspector general of the Department of Justice, who previously had refused to investigate the matter, sent a letter to representatives Lamar Smith and Frank Wolf advising them that in response to their requests in July and August the inspector general would undertake an investigation of the Voting Section's enforcement of civil rights laws. Echoing the civil rights commission's yearlong investigation, the inspector general's probe will examine

> the types of cases brought by the Voting Section and any changes in these types of cases over time; any changes in the Voting Section's enforcement policies or procedures over time; whether the Voting Section has enforced the civil rights laws in a nondiscriminatory manner; and whether any Voting Section employees have been harassed for participating in the investigation or prosecution of particular matters.

It remains to be seen whether this is an effort by the department to take the investigation behind closed doors or actually to get to the bottom of a mushrooming scandal.

In any event, despite the Obama team's best efforts to stonewall and the mainstream media's indifference to an abuse of power in a Democratic administration, the notion that the New Black Panther party case is "no big deal" is crumbling. We know that a high ranking political appointee presented misleading testimony under oath and that multiple witnesses would testify to the Obama administration's hostility to the equal enforcement of our civil rights laws. Now an internal investigation is exploring those issues. In a Republican administration that would be front-page news. ♦

Environmental Hazards

Why the climate campaign failed.

BY STEVEN F. HAYWARD

With the ignominious collapse of cap and trade legislation in the Senate, the climate campaign is licking its wounds and wondering where it went wrong. Greens are pointing fingers at the bad economy, the Senate's 60-vote threshold, and those dastardly Earth-hating Republicans. But they ought to look in the mirror, for the fault lies with themselves.

Politico's environmental reporter Darren Samuelsohn quoted an anonymous White House official speaking disdainfully about the climate campaign's efforts: "They didn't deliver a single Republican. They spent like $100 million, and they weren't able to get a single Republican convert on the bill." Maybe this is because the environmental movement made a strategic error years ago by deciding to make itself an adjunct of the left wing of the Democratic party.

At times the greens have been quite open about this. Back in 2005 a group of leading climate campaigners met in Aspen to plot strategy. According to a conference report Yale University published, one faction argued that "the only way to proceed is to exercise raw political power, wake up the public about the urgent nature of the issue, create a major public demand for action comparable to that which stimulated major environmental legislation in the 1970s, pursue outright victory at the polls." In other words, we need to boot out or roll over the Republicans. The 2008 election delivered their moment, and now their moment is gone.

The greens have been so relentlessly hostile to all Republicans—even ones with conventionally pro-environment records—that Republicans have little reason to accommodate their views. Senator Lindsey Graham, a possible convert on cap and trade, laid it out clearly to Samuelsohn: "So when you hear the environmental community is mad at you, everyone says, 'Tell me something new.' It's not like a support group you've lost."

To be sure, many conservatives are hostile to the environmental agenda for good and bad reasons, and I've made the case that they owe more serious attention to the full spectrum of environmental issues. But the partisan bad faith of the organized environmental establishment is glaring.

Consider the case of the first President Bush, who pushed hard for a new Clean Air Act in 1990 (most environmental groups boycotted the signing ceremony on the White House lawn, though), and then went to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, signing the U.N. treaty on climate change that set the Kyoto Protocol process in motion, and also signing a major biodiversity treaty. So how many environmental groups endorsed Bush for reelection in 1992? In round numbers: zero.

A better example is the explicitly political League of Conservation Voters, which puts out an annual legislative scorecard that ranks every member of Congress on about 20 key votes. Of course an advocacy group is entitled to construct a rating system

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based on policy outcomes consistent with its ideology, but the League of Conservation Voters scorecards seem especially calculated to make Republicans look bad and to carry water for other left-leaning interest groups with scored votes that have only minimal connection to the environment.

The most egregious example is from the League of Conservation Voters' 2005 scorecard, where one of the 20 key Senate votes was the confirmation of Janice Rogers Brown to the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals. As the League of Conservation Voters complained, "Brown has demonstrated a far-reaching hostility to the idea of regulating private interests for the public good . . . Acceptance of her activist positions would threaten some of the past century's most basic health and environmental protections." Brown was eventually confirmed after a two-year Democratic filibuster by a near party-line vote, meaning that the League of Conservation Voters' scoring also fell on party lines.

But there's a surprise ending here. In her two rulings to date on environmental issues before the D.C. Circuit, Brown sided with unanimous opinions of Clinton appointees in delivering sweeping victories to the environmentalist position on two major Clean Air Act cases, and against the Bush administration that appointed her (*South Coast Air Quality Management District* v. *EPA*, 2006, and *New Jersey* v. *EPA*, 2008). Has the League of Conservation Voters gone back and rescored this vote since they were plainly wrong about Brown?

If judicial philosophy is a worry to the League of Conservation Voters, moreover, why pick the Brown confirmation vote to score, rather than the Supreme Court confirmation vote that same year of John Roberts? Not only was Roberts heading for the top position on the highest court, he had challenged the constitutionality of the Endangered Species Act in a dissenting opinion where he spoke of a "hapless toad" in California. But 22 Democratic senators voted to confirm Roberts, versus only one for Brown—scoring the more significant Roberts vote instead would have lowered more Democratic scores. Scoring the Brown vote made Republican moderates like Maine's Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe look bad, never mind erstwhile cap and trade supporters Graham and John McCain.

But the final reason the League of Conservation Voters decided to score the Brown vote rather than the Roberts vote is that the activist left targeted Brown for defeat because she is an African American, and the left is terrified of conservative minorities in prominent positions. The entire hive of leftist groups from the NAACP, NOW, People for the American Way, and even the National Council of Jewish Women opposed Brown's nomination. The League of Conservation Voters could be counted upon to take one for the team because that's how they roll. Other left coalition-pleasing but environmentally dubious scoring items include opposing free trade agreements and supporting low-income energy assistance so poor people can use more fossil fuels. The final irony for the greens is that had John McCain (who received zeroes on League of Conservation Voters scorecards in 2007 and 2008) been elected president instead of Obama (who almost always scored perfectly for the League of Conservation Voters—when he was around to cast a Senate vote), we'd likely have a cap and trade bill in place right now, as McCain would have made it a higher priority than health care reform. He had cosponsored earlier cap and trade proposals with Senator Joe Lieberman.

In other words, the "nonpartisan" League of Conservation Voters is to the Democratic party what the "nonpartisan" National Rifle Association is to the Republican party—a reliable wingman. The only asymmetry is that so many people are fooled by it, starting with the greens themselves. ♦

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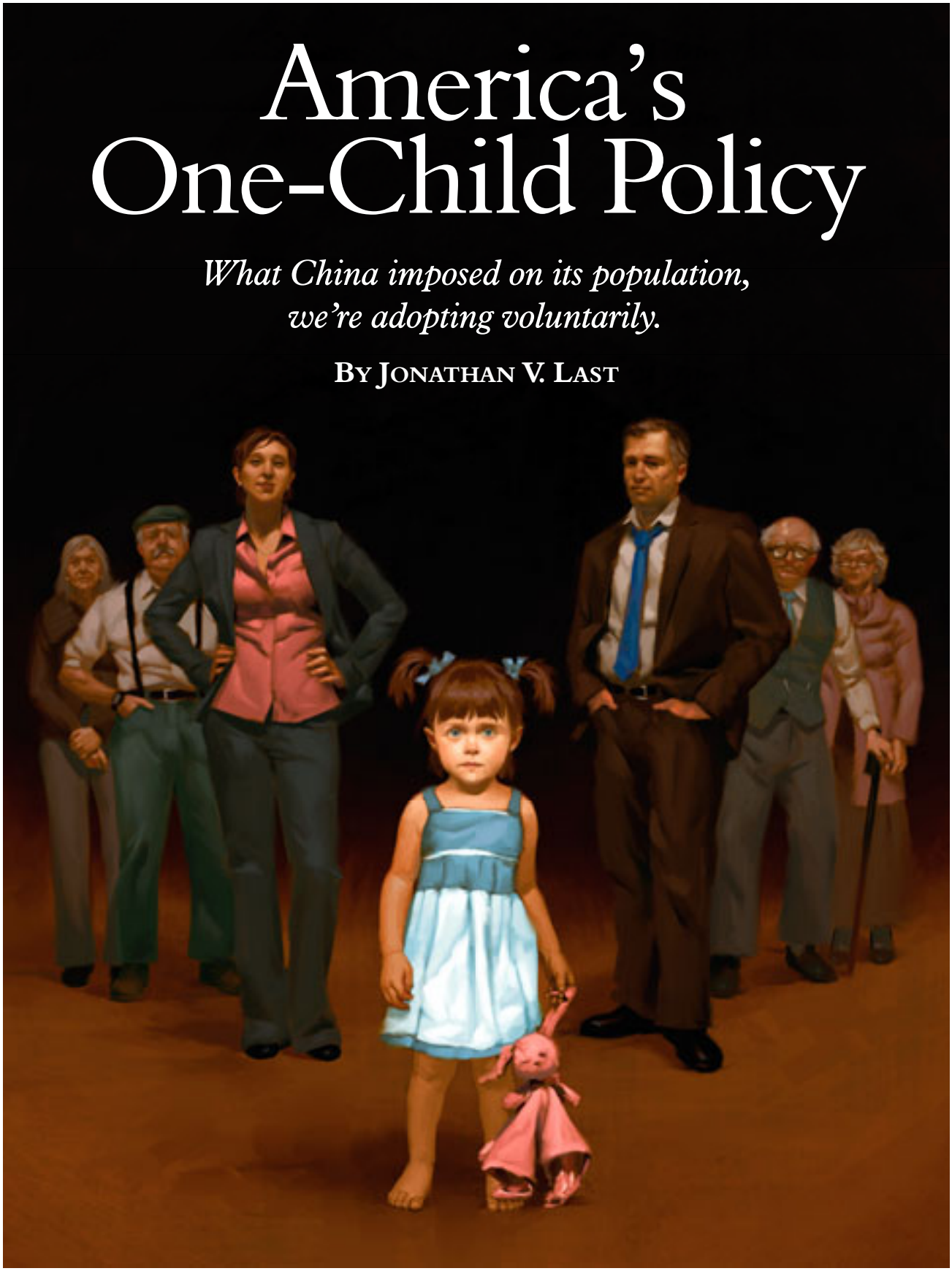
America's One-Child Policy

What China imposed on its population, we're adopting voluntarily.

By Jonathan V. Last



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For the last several months, Chinese officials have been floating the idea of relaxing the country's famed "One-Child" policy. One-Child has long been admired in the West by environmentalists, anti-population doomsayers, and some of our sillier professional wise men. In *Hot, Flat, and Crowded* (2008), for instance, Tom Friedman lauded the policy for saving China from "a population calamity." What Friedman and others fail to understand is that China is built upon a crumbling demographic base. One-Child may or may not have "saved" China from overpopulation, but it has certainly created a demographic catastrophe.

Between 1950 and 1970, the average Chinese woman had roughly six children during her lifetime. Beginning in 1970, the Chinese government began urging a course of "late, long, few," and in a decade the fertility rate dropped from 5.9 to 2.1. But that wasn't enough for the government. In 1979, they instituted the One-Child policy—which is more complicated than it sounds.

Under One-Child, couples wanting a baby were required to obtain permission from local officials. (In 2002, the government relaxed this provision; you can now have one child without government clearance.) After having one child, urban residents and government employees were forbidden from having another. In rural areas, however, couples are often allowed to have a second baby five years after the first. Any more than two, however, and the government institutes penalties. Sanctions range from heavy fines to confiscation of belongings to dismissal from work—in addition to the occasional forced abortion or sterilization. The overall result is a Chinese fertility rate that now sits somewhere between 1.9 and 1.3, depending on who is doing the tabulating. Nicholas Eberstadt noted that "In some major population centers—Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin among them—it appears that the average number of births per woman is amazingly low: below one baby per lifetime."

One-Child marked a radical change in the trajectory of China's population, from staggering growth to probable contraction. In 1950, China had 550 million people; today it is home to 1.33 billion. According to projections from the United Nations' Population Division, China's population will peak at 1.458 billion in 2030. But then it will begin shrinking. By 2050, China will be down to 1.408 billion and losing 20 million people every five years.

At the same time, the average age in China will rise dramatically. In 2005, China's median age was 32. By 2050, it will be 45, and a quarter of the Chinese population will be over the age of 65. The government's pension system is almost nonexistent, and One-Child has eliminated the traditional support system of the extended family—most people no longer have brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, or nephews. It is unclear what sort of havoc this atomization will wreak on their society. China will have 330 million senior citizens with no one to care for them and no way to pay for their upkeep. It is, Eberstadt observed, "a slow-motion humanitarian tragedy already underway."

By 2050, the age structure in China will be such that there are only 1.6 workers—today the country has 5.4—to support each retiree. The government will be forced to either: (1) substantially cut spending (in areas such as defense and public works) in order to shift resources to care for the elderly or (2) impose radically higher tax burdens on younger workers. The first option risks China's international and military ambitions; the second risks revolution.

When we talk about the "fertility rate," we mean the "total fertility rate" (TFR): the number of children born to the average woman over the course of her lifetime. In order for a country to maintain a steady population, it needs a fertility rate of 2.1. If the rate is higher, the country's population grows; lower and it shrinks.

During the last 50 years, fertility rates have fallen all over the world. From Africa to Asia, South America to Eastern Europe, from Third World jungles to the wealthy desert petro-kingdoms, every country in every region is experiencing declines in fertility. In 1979, the world's fertility rate was 6.0; today it's 2.6. Industrialized nations have been the hardest hit. America's 2.06 is one of the highest fertility rates in the First World. Only Israel (2.75) and New Zealand (2.10) are more fertile.

China and America have yet to witness the effects of falling fertility because of demographic momentum. Populations increase even as fertility rates collapse, until the last above-replacement generation dies, after which the population begins contracting. The rate of contraction speeds up as each generation passes. No society has ever experienced prosperity in the wake of contracting population.

Like China today, 30 years ago Japan was supposedly on the verge of eclipsing America economically. But like China, Japan was also in dire demographic straits. In 1950, the average Japanese woman had 2.75 children during her lifetime. That number dropped to 2.08 by 1960. By 1995, it had fallen to 1.49. In 2010, the Japanese fertility rate is 1.2.

Japan's demographic momentum kept its population slowly increasing during the late 1990s and early 2000s; in 2004, it peaked at 127.84 million. And then the contraction began. In 2008, Japan lost 145,000 people and by 2025, it will have lost 6 million. By 2050, it will have shed an additional 17 million people, leaving its total population

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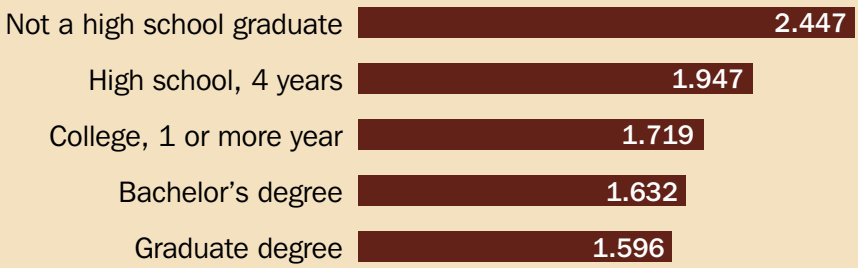
around 100 million and falling. And a declining population is necessarily an aging population, meaning that you're faced with both a decline in demand for goods and services (because the population is getting smaller) and at the same time a labor shortage (because so many of the remaining people are too old to work). In 2050, the largest five-year cohort in Japan is expected to be people aged 75-79. While health care will likely be a growth sector, this is not a recipe for a robust economy.

Culturally speaking, Japan's fertility problem is a marriage problem: As Japanese women began attending college at greater rates in the 1970s, they began to delay marriage. By 2000, the average age of first marriage for college graduates was over 30. At first, these women simply postponed childbearing; then they abandoned it. Today, college-educated Japanese women have, on average, barely one child during their lifetimes.

More Books, Fewer Babies

Total U.S. fertility rate according to female educational level in 2006



SOURCE: Jane Lawler Dye, Fertility of American Women: 2006, *August 2008.*

These changes created some new cultural stereotypes in Japan. For instance, it is not uncommon to see dogs paraded around in strollers by childless, adult women. But the most prevalent new demographic archetype is the *parasaito shinguru* or "parasite single." These creatures are college-educated, working women who live with their parents well into their 30s—not because they are too poor to pay rent, but because they spend their salaries on designer clothes, international travel, and fancy restaurants. The parasite singles are Japan's biggest consumer group because, unlike real adults, their entire paychecks are available for discretionary spending. Sociologist Masahiro Yamada, who coined the term, explains, "They are like the ancient aristocrats of feudal times, but their parents play the role of servants. Their lives are spoiled. The only thing that's important to them is seeking pleasure."

The Japanese government has been trying to stoke fertility since the early 1970s. In 1972, when Japan's fertility rate was still above replacement, the government introduced a monthly per-child subsidy for parents. Over the years, the government tinkered with the subsidy, altering the amount and raising the age allowance. None of which made much difference: The fertility rate fell at a steady pace. In 1990, the government formed a committee charged with "Creating a sound environment for bearing and rearing children," the fruit of which was a Childcare Leave Act aimed at helping working mothers.

In 2003, Japan passed the "Law for Basic Measures to Cope with a Declining Fertility Society," followed two years later by the "Law for Measures to Support the Development of the Next Generation." To get a sense of how daft the Japanese bureaucrats and politicians are, one of the new provisions required businesses to create—but not implement—abstract "plans" for raising the fertility level of their workers.

In the face of 35 years of failed incentives, Japan's fertility rate stands at 1.2. This is below what is considered "lowest low," a mathematical tipping point at which a country's population will decline by as much as 50 percent within 45 years. This is a death spiral from which, demographers believe, it is impossible to escape. Then again, that's just theory: History has never seen fertility rates so low.

Next to Japan's, the U.S. fertility rate looks pretty good at 2.06. The massive, continual influx of immigrants we receive is enough to keep the U.S. population slowly growing. But America's fertility rate has been falling since the founding.

Colgate economist Michael Haines combined the 1790 census with other data sets to determine that in 1800 the fertility rate for white American females was 7.04 and for black was 7.90. (All early American demographic data were kept separately for the two races.) Fertility rates for both groups have fallen steadily. The only significant uptick came at the end of World War II with the Baby Boom. For 20 years, fertility rates spiked, reaching as high as 3.53 for white women and 4.52 for black women in 1960.

The Baby Boom was notable not just for its magnitude but for its longevity—it lasted an entire generation, creating a population bulge that still bloats our demographic profile. Yet despite its impact, the Baby Boom was tempo-

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rary. In the cultural moment that followed during the 1960s and 1970s, the fertility rate in America—and indeed around the world—went bust. In Canada, the United States, Japan, and Western Europe, in every single Western industrialized nation, the fertility rate plummeted.

From a combined TFR of 3.7 in 1960, U.S. fertility halved to 1.8 in 1980. It has rebounded slightly during the last few decades, but that upward movement has more to do with Hispanic immigration than with increased native fertility. In 2006, the fertility rate of non-Hispanic whites was 1.77; the fertility rate of blacks was 2.0. Of America's major demographic groups, only Hispanics are above replacement, with a TFR of 2.3. Yet even the Hispanic population has seen its fertility rate fall some 8 percent in the last decade. Indeed, the problem with immigration as it relates to fertility isn't the old complaint that the newcomers are out-breeding the natives. Rather, the problem is that the newcomers start behaving like natives too soon, with their TFR regressing quickly to the mean. If we are to maintain even our modest 2.06, we need an ever-greater supply of immigrants.

Today there are 26.6 million legal immigrants living in America and roughly 11.3 million illegals. We need these workers to prop up the entitlement programs we're no longer having enough babies to fund. In order to keep Social Security and Medicare running, we need a stable ratio of workers to retirees. If we were to keep the ratio at the present level of three workers for every retiree—already lower than it has ever been—America would need to add 44.9 million new immigrants between 2025 and 2035. If we wanted to keep the ratio at 5.2 workers for every retiree—about what it was in 1960, before the collapse of our fertility rate—we'd need to import 10.8 million immigrants every year until 2050. At which point the United States would have 1.1 billion people, 73 percent of whom would be the descendants of recent immigrants.

Putting aside questions of cultural coherence—remember the joke: "Democracy, immigration, multiculturalism: You may pick two"?—it would be logistically impossible to add 10.8 million immigrants a year. As demographer Phillip Longman notes, "such a flow would require the equivalent of building another New York City every ten months or so."

There is a supply-side problem, too. Immigrants began streaming over America's southern border in the 1980s for several reasons. America was safer and freer. There were more and better jobs. But there was also an enormous surplus of labor in Latin America as a result of high fertility rates. In Mexico, for instance, the fertility rate was 6.82 in 1970. It dropped to 5.3 in 1980, 3.61 in 1990, and 2.75 in 2000. It now sits at 2.1. You see this trend across the entire Latin world. Some countries, such as Chile and Costa Rica, are already well below replacement. And when a country's fertility drops below replacement, people tend to stop emigrating. Consider Puerto Rico. In 1955, Puerto Rico's fertility rate was 4.97. (The major Puerto Rican migration to America began in the 1950s.) Over time, Puerto Rican fertility diminished. By 2000, it had dipped to 1.99. For 2010, it is estimated to be 1.65.

During this same period, emigrating from Puerto Rico to the United States became easier, and while the economic situation in Puerto Rico brightened somewhat, it did not improve dramatically. Yet the number of Puerto Ricans moving to America during that span plummeted—from 80,000 in 1955 to just 3,800 in 2008. And this took place as the population of Puerto Rico itself was nearly doubling, from 2.25 million to 3.97 million.

There is no reason to believe that the example of Puerto Rico will not translate to the rest of Latin America. To our south, fertility rates are generally still higher than our own. But the *rate of decline* is much steeper. The average fertility rate for Latin America in the 1960s was 6.0 children per woman; by 2005 that average had dropped to 2.5. Within a decade or two, every single country in Latin America will have a fertility rate below that of the United States. And at that point, immigration from the region may significantly diminish.

There is a constellation of factors tamping down fertility in America. And even with steady immigration, they represent our own, bottom-up adoption of a One-Child regimen.

At the most basic level, the decline of infant mortality played a large part. In 1850, 2-in-10 white babies and 3.4-in-10 black babies died during infancy. Steady improvements in medicine, sanitation, and nutrition reduced infant mortality to asymptotic levels—today just 6.22 deaths for every 1,000 live births.

Americans also began migrating from rural areas to cities and transitioning from farm work to factories. These changes made children both less useful and more expensive.

Social changes have affected the fertility rate, too. Some of these changes are small and simple—like the evolution of car-seat laws, which make it difficult to transport more than two children. Some—like the rise of the educated woman—are massively complex.

One of the best predictors of fertility is education: The more educated a woman is, the fewer children she will have. The total fertility rate for American women without a high school diploma is 2.45. With each subsequent level of educational attainment, fertility falls—it drops to 1.6 for women with a graduate degree. One of the drivers of our

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fertility decline was the making of college de rigueur for middle-class women.

From 1879 to 1930, American men and women graduated from college at roughly the same low rate. This was as much a function of the university being the preserve of the privileged as it was of gender equality. It wasn't until 1930 that college graduation rates between the sexes began diverging, with men becoming markedly better educated. By 1947, 2.3 men graduated from college for every woman. That divergence was not, as the feminist-industrial complex would have you believe, the result of sexism. Before the two world wars, college was open only to a small pool of wealthy elites and was partaken of by these men and women in equal measure. The G.I. Bill broadened access to college for former soldiers, who were, naturally, men. As these middle- and lower-middle-class men flooded the classrooms, a gender gap was created.

With the class restrictions lifted, however, it was only a matter of time before middle- and lower-middle-class women caught up with their male counterparts. By 1980, the balance was again even. And, by 2003, women significantly outnumbered men in college, with 1.35 women graduating for every man.

But let's wind the clock back to the period stretching from the 1950s to the early 1970s. What's interesting about this interregnum isn't that men outnumbered women, but rather what it was women graduating from college *did* with their degrees. Nearly half of those female graduates were involved in a single field—education. And as it turns out, being a teacher is highly compatible with having babies. As more women began attending college, however, they entered a broader array of fields, many of which were less friendly to family life. For the class of 1980, for instance, only 36 percent of female graduates became teachers and that number has continued to drop.

As women entered other careers, they postponed having babies. A teacher can reasonably graduate from college at 22, begin working immediately, and if she so chooses, marry and have children in short order without losing ground in her career. By comparison, consider the life of a young woman who becomes a doctor: Graduate with a bachelor's degree at 22; graduate from medical school at 26; finish residency at 29. If our doctor does not pursue any specialization, she can begin her career as she turns 30. Only then is childbearing even theoretically possible, and it will come at some expense to her nascent career.

The first effect of the broadening of women's career paths was to push up the average age of marriage. In 1950, the average age of first marriage for an American woman was 20.3 years. Between 1950 and 1970—when a large percentage of women were still entering the teaching profession—that number ticked upward only slightly, to 20.8 years. By 1980 it had risen to 22.0 years; by 1990 it was 23.9, and off to the races. By 2007, the average American woman did not wed until she was 26.

The drop in fertility among women with college and advanced degrees, then, is in large part due to delayed family formation. The longer a middle-class woman waits to get married, the longer she will wait to have children. For example, in 1970, the average age of a woman in the United States giving birth to her first child was 21.4 years. In 2000, it was 24.9 years.

The American drive for education has had other subtle effects on fertility. For instance, it's not just the length of education that diminishes fertility, but the debt-load incurred. In 1987, 9 percent of college graduates said they were delaying marriage because of their student loans and 12 percent said they were delaying children. As student debts ballooned, so did those numbers. By 2002, 14 percent said they were pushing back marriage and 21 percent said they were postponing having children because of their loans.

If the G.I. Bill could wreak so much havoc on fertility rates, imagine the effects of the last century's two great changes in sexual life: the contraceptive pill and the legalization of on-demand abortion. Calculating the number of babies not born because of the birth control pill is impossible. But without confusing correlation and causation, it is worth noting that the pill became available in America and much of the West in 1960, the precise moment when fertility rates began heading into deep decline.

On the other hand, it is quite easy to make an accounting of abortion's effects. Before the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe* v. *Wade* decision, the tide of public opinion in America was against abortion. Accordingly, there were relatively few abortions, even though most states allowed for early-term abortions. In 1970, for example, there were 193,491 reported legal abortions. Certainly, this number undercounts the real total because it does not include illegal abortions. But let's take 200,000 as a baseline. In 1973, as *Roe* created a universal abortion right, the number of reported abortions rose to 744,600. The next year, that number rose by 20 percent, to 898,600 abortions. By this time all abortions were legal, and so we can be confident that this number is fairly accurate. Over the course of the next 15 years the number of abortions rose by almost 100 percent.

In 1973—the year of the *Roe* decision—there were 3.1 million babies born. Over the next 10 years that number rose only slightly, despite the fact that America's total population was increasing quickly. Why weren't there more babies born in the decade following *Roe*? Because during that time, 13.6 million were aborted—meaning that 28.5 percent of all pregnancies ended in abortion. Since *Roe* more than 49.5 million babies have been aborted in the United States, and the fertility rate has varied inversely to

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the abortion rate, generally declining when abortion is on the rise and rising when abortion is on the decline.

Fertility isn't all about sex, of course. It also involves that other great American passion: real estate. Fertility rates vary widely across the 50 states. The states with the highest are found mostly in the West, while the states with the lowest fertility are found mostly in the industrialized Northeast. The more fertile states tend to be more rural; the less fertile more urban. And the more fertile states tend to have lower land costs and, hence, costs of living. The cultural demographer Steve Sailer refers to this phenomenon as the "dirt gap."

Beyond even the cost of real estate, housing stock influences fertility. When dramatically falling fertility first appeared in Europe after World War I, demographers went into a panic. In Sweden, researchers noticed that the small, modernist apartment buildings which had sprung up across the country were pushing couples to have fewer children. Subsequent research has demonstrated the effects of housing stock on fertility across the globe. Studies show the same results over and over—all things being equal, women living in apartments or condominiums have fewer babies than women living in single-family homes. This phenomenon has been demonstrated everywhere from New Jersey to Colombia to Great Britain to Iran.

People like to say that buying a house is the biggest purchase you'll ever make. Well, the median price of a home in 2008 was $180,100. Having a baby is like buying six houses, all at once. Except that you can't (legally) sell them—and after 13 years they'll tell you they hate you.

How much does housing type matter? A 1988 Canadian study showed that even when you control for education, income, and other factors, married couples who lived in apartment-type buildings had 0.42 fewer children over their lifetimes than married couples in single-family homes. From the 1940s until the 1960s, there was a boom in the construction of detached, single-family homes in America. Levittowns sprang up across the country and, by 1960, single-family homes represented their biggest share of American housing stock in modern times. This coincides perfectly with the Baby Boom. On the other hand, large-scale apartment and condominium complexes became more popular during the 1960s. Their percentage of the total U.S. housing stock increased by 40 percent from 1960 to 1970 and by another 23 percent from 1970 to 1980: the precise years during which America's fertility numbers went into steep decline.

And then there's consumerism. It's a cliché to complain about $800 baby strollers and designer children's clothing. But even the clichés no longer capture the lunacy of it all. One popular baby stroller, the Bugaboo Cameleon, retails for $880. That's a bargain compared with Avila's innovative "round" crib. Crafted from cherry wood, it goes for $1,285. But even if you sift out the consumerist outrages, the cost of raising a child today is staggering.

In 1960, the USDA estimated that the total cost of raising a child, from birth until age 18, was $25,229 ($185,817 in 2010 dollars)—they measured food at home and away, clothing, housing, medical care, education, transportation, and "personal care, recreation, reading and other miscellaneous expenditures." Over the next 25 years, that cost remained reasonably constant, rising and falling by minor degrees. By 1985, it was (in real dollars) actually slightly cheaper to raise a child than it had been in 1960. But after 1985 children became steadily more expensive. By 2007, the cost of raising a child had risen 15.4 percent over the 1960 level.

The USDA, in its calculations, leaves out many of the little costs of parenthood—maternity clothes, baby furniture, toys, vitamins. Yet even these items are just nickels and dimes. The real money is in three big-ticket items that the USDA ignores: child care, college tuition, and forgone salary.

Let's start with child care. The 2007 USDA survey reports that the average family spent $4,000 on child care during the first two years of a child's life. In the real world, that $4,000 is little more than a mathematical construct. The National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies reports that in 2008, the average cost of full-time care for an infant from a babysitter or nanny was $9,630 per year. The average cost of full-time care for an infant in a day-care center was $14,591 per year.

The USDA also ignores college. Recall our mammoth college gender gap in 1947. Even though many more men than women were going to college, very few people were enrolled at all—only 10 percent of college-aged men and 3.4 percent of college-aged women attended a university. Today, the majority of children—and the vast majority of middle-class children—attend college. In 2006, 66 percent of high school graduates enrolled in either a two- or four-year degree program within a year of completing high school.

These costs beggar belief. For the 2009 school year, the average tuition at a state college was $7,020. Private colleges averaged $26,273. Neither of those figures includes room,

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board, and other expenses—another $12,755 for full-time students not living at home (though only $12,368 for state-school students). So a child starting college today will cost her parents somewhere from $77,552 (for an average state-school degree) to $156,112 (for an average private degree). Remember, please, that we're talking averages here. If your bundle of joy is lucky enough to gain entrance to an elite university, the four-year tab will easily top $200,000. Over the last 35 years, the period during which college became a necessary expense for middle-class life, the price of college increased—in real dollars—by *1,000 percent.*

Finally, there's the matter of forgone income. Recall that the USDA assumes virtually no expenditures for child care. This implies that one parent stays home at least until the child reaches school age. In *The Empty Cradle* (2004), Phillip Longman explored the cost of lost income by mothers and calculates that a woman making $45,000 a year who stays home until her child is school-aged and then returns to work part-time forgoes $823,736 by the time her child turns 18.

Add that number to the others and you're talking $1.1 million to raise a single child. That's a lot of money for a middle-class couple. In 2007, the median income for Americans in their prime child-bearing years (ages 25 to 34) was just $30,846 (or $40,739 for those with a college degree). People like to say that buying a house is the biggest purchase you'll ever make. Well, the median price of a home in 2008 was $180,100. Having a baby is like buying six houses, all at once. Except that you can't (legally) sell them—and after 13 years they'll tell you they hate you.

There was a time when such indignities were worth suffering because children served a practical purpose: They cared for their parents in old age. Oftentimes physically; always financially. Beginning with the New Deal, the logistics of this social compact began to change. In 1935, the Social Security Act established government payouts for retirees. These benefits were paid for by a new payroll tax on those working. Over time, Social Security payments expanded, the taxes increased, and new benefits—such as Medicare—were added.

It's difficult to overstate the effects of these initiatives. For starters, they created an enormous new burden for workers. In 1955, the median American family paid 17.3 percent in income taxes. By 1998, the median one-earner family paid 37.6 percent in income taxes; two-earner families paid 40.9 percent. Social Security and Medicare placed an increasing burden on families at the same time that the cost of children was also increasing.

There were other consequences. Where people's offspring had for centuries seen to the financial needs of their parents, retired people with no offspring now had access to a set of comparable benefits. And in a world where child-bearing has no practical benefit, people have babies because they want to, either for self-fulfillment or as a moral imperative. "Moral imperative," of course, is a euphemism for "religious compulsion." There are stark differences in fertility between secular and religious people.

The best indicator of actual fertility is "aspirational fertility"—the number of children men and women say they would like to have. Gallup has been asking Americans about their "ideal family size" since 1936. When they first asked the question, 64 percent of Americans said that three or more children were ideal; 34 percent said that zero, one, or two children were ideal. Today only 34 percent of Americans think that a family with three-or-more children is ideal.

But on this question there are two Americas today: a secular population that wants small families (or no family at all) and a religious population that wants larger families. Religious affiliation is part of the story, but the real difference comes with church attendance. Among people who seldom or never go to church, 66 percent say that zero, one, or two children is the ideal family size, and only 25 percent view three-or-more children as ideal. Among those who go to church monthly, the three-or-more number edges up to 29 percent. But among those who attend church every week, 41 percent say three or more children is ideal, while only 47 percent think that a smaller family is preferable. When you meet couples with more than three children today, chances are they're making a cultural and theological statement.

And the truth is, America needs more of such statements. The United Nations Population Division's projection of our demographic future makes for stark reading. Native fertility rates are so low that without a continual influx of immigrants to stave off population decline, our population will shrink from 308 million to 290 million by 2050.

Our challenge is to balance three needs: (1) a stable population, (2) a plausible ratio of workers-to-retirees, and (3) a manageable number of immigrants. Yet, for instance, to keep the worker-support ratio at high levels would require, as we saw earlier, gargantuan levels of immigration. Keeping immigration at a reasonable level (the U.N. uses 760,000 immigrants a year as a baseline) would mean that our population would increase to 349 million in 2050, but that our worker-support ratio would be cut in half. If we cut off immigration altogether the worker-support ratio would be even lower, and in addition, we'd face rapid population decline.

The simplest answer is for Americans to have more babies.

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Throughout history, governments have tried to get people to procreate. Augustus levied a "bachelor tax" on unmarried, aristocratic men. In 1927, Mussolini imposed a tax on all unmarried men between the ages of 25 and 65. The Soviet Union spent the last 50 years of its existence attempting to cajole it citizenry into having more children. In 1944, for instance, Stalin created the Motherhood Medal, given to any woman who bore at least six children. None of these attempts was successful. But they raise the question of what smart pronatalist policies would look like in America today.

The Social Security regime is the most obvious and easily addressable problem. Longman proposes a "Parental Dividend" system by which a couple's FICA taxes would be reduced by one-third with the birth of their first child, by two-thirds with the birth of a second, and then eliminated completely with the third (until the youngest child turns 18). Other, more complicated schemes abound. Regardless of the means, though, the goal is the same: Reduce the disconnect between the costs of creating new taxpayers and the benefits of receiving government pensions.

An early Singaporean family planning poster

The costs of raising children could also be undercut by reforming the college system. The modern college degree functions less as an educational tool than as a credentialing badge—a marker which gives employers a vague estimate of a person's intelligence, social milieu, and work ability. The reason employers need this badge is that, thanks to an obscure Supreme Court case, they aren't allowed to ask for test scores the way colleges are.

In the 1971 case *Griggs* v. *Duke Power*, the Court held that employers could not rely on IQ-type tests if minorities performed relatively poorly on them. Blacks and Hispanics display a persistent underperformance on such tests, making it impossible for employers to ask for test scores. (As the recent *Ricci* case proved, even a test that has been sufficiently vetted beforehand for a lack of bias can cause trouble if minorities perform poorly on it.) So employers launder their request for test scores through the college system since colleges *are* allowed to use such considerations. The universities get rich, students and their parents go into hock, and everyone pretends that Acme Widgets is hiring young Suzy because they value her B.A. in English from Haverford, and not because her *admission* to Haverford proved that she is bright—a fact that a free, three-hour written test would have demonstrated just as well. If *Griggs* were rolled back, it would upend the college system at a stroke.

Finally, we could address the dirt gap—the underlying cost of land, which drives the cost of living and gives rise to the dramatic differences in fertility we see across the country. People often make decisions on where to live based on employment. High concentrations of jobs are found in intensely urban areas—Los Angeles, New York, Washington, Chicago—which have correspondingly high land costs. This is why we have the accurate stereotype of the working couple who move from the city to the exurbs once they decide to have kids.

Geography is unpleasantly resistant to social planning. There are only so many acres of land in Manhattan, and there's nothing anyone can to do to make it less expensive (though correcting the absurdity of New York City's rent-control/rent-stabilization system would help). But we could make the suburbs more accessible to cities by improving our highway system. Since 1970, the "vehicle lane miles" (that's the metric traffic engineers use) consumed by Americans have risen by 150 percent. During that period we added 5 percent to our highway capacity. Now you know why we have so much traffic.

The answer is not building more public transportation. Parents trying to balance work and children need the flexibility automobiles provide. The solution is building more roads. As Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam noted wryly in *Grand New Party* (2008), Dallas has twice as much pavement-per-person as Los Angeles and half the traffic. And, not coincidentally, a higher fertility rate. An improved highway system would make it easier for couples to have access to both the concentration of jobs cities provide and the affordable housing that the suburbs offer.

Yet even if we adopt such measures, they may do little to change American fertility. It turns out that a government cannot convince people to have children; all it can do is help people to have the children they already want.

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In 1965, Singapore gained full independence from the British, and the government embarked on a program of rapid industrialization. Among its initiatives were increased urbanization and an attempt to jumpstart women's rates of college graduation and participation in the workforce. Singapore's fertility rate was already in decline, having fallen from 5.45 in 1960 to 4.7 in 1965. As part of modernization, however, the government wanted to drive the fertility rate down even faster. In 1966, the government created the "Family Planning and Population Board" and launched a propaganda campaign, using messages such as "Stop at Two" and "Small Families, Brighter Future." The most popular slogan, recounted in numerous posters and public service ads, was "Girl or Boy, Two Is Enough."

Accompanying this bright, cheery campaign was an array of less gentle policies. Abortion was sanctioned—and even encouraged—at every stage. Parents who had more than two children were punished with no paid maternity leave and higher hospital charges for the delivery of the extra babies. Couples were encouraged to volunteer for sterilization. Parents who did so after having just one or two children were reimbursed for the medical costs of delivering those babies and their children were given preference in registering for the best schools.

The tactics were frighteningly effective. In 1976—just ten years after the campaign began—Singapore reached its target of 2.1. They had pushed their fertility rate down 53 percent in a decade. But the rate kept diving, down to 1.74 by 1980. The biggest fertility decline came from the elites: Singapore, like every other industrialized country, found that the more education a woman had and the better her job, the less likely she was to have children.

In 1983, Singapore's prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, spoke about the country's demographic problem with a candor that is the luxury of autocrats:

> [W]e shouldn't get our women into jobs where they cannot, at the same time, be mothers. . . . You just can't be doing a full-time, heavy job like that of a doctor or engineer and run a home and bring up children. . . . Our most valuable asset is in the ability of our people, yet we are frittering away this asset through the unintended consequences of changes in our education policy and equal career opportunities for women. This has affected their traditional role as mothers.

In an attempt to boost fertility rates among the elites, the government began offering big tax breaks to highly educated women who had three or more children. A matchmaking service was created by the government for university graduates to encourage young professional men and women to get married. None of it worked. Educated women still shunned motherhood. Even worse, Singapore realized that lower-class women had stopped having babies, too. By 1984, Singapore's fertility rate was 1.62 and falling.

The government dissolved the Family Planning and Population Board. "Two Is Enough" was replaced by "Have Three Or More Children If You Can," a slogan broadcast on TV and radio and pushed in print ads and on billboards. Posters abounded proclaiming the joy and fulfillment of family life. Tax-incentives were given to families with more than three children, as were school admissions preferences. Unpaid maternity leave for government workers was increased from one year to four years. For a brief period these pro-natalist measures seemed to be working, but they merely delayed the downward march. By 1999, the fertility rate stood at 1.49.

In 2000, the government announced a series of new initiatives. The first was the "Baby Bonus" program, which paid families for having children: $9,000 for the second child and $18,000 for the third. The tax code was modified to give a hefty break to mothers under the age of 31 who had a second child. The government created "Child Development Accounts," which function like a 401(k) for kids, with the government matching parents' savings dollar-for-dollar. Mothers were granted 12 weeks of *paid* maternity leave with each birth.

The government offered better, larger housing for families with children and made it easier for young married couples to buy a home. They even embarked on a program to find grandparents housing close to their grandchildren, to help ease the burden of childcare. At the same time, the government did its best to undo the disincentives it had created a few years earlier. The $10,000 bonus for sterilization was scrapped. Officials were reluctant to ban abortion outright, but launched a public campaign against it. Women with fewer than three children who sought either sterilization or an abortion were required to attend counseling before any procedure would be performed.

Singapore had become a pro-natalist utopia, where aggressive government intervention was married to a willingness to talk frankly about demographic failure and uphold traditionalist mores. (In 1994, for instance, the prime minister spoke out against illegitimacy, calling single motherhood "wrong" and claiming that the "respectable part of society" should never accept it because "by removing the stigma, we may encourage more women to have children without getting married.") And yet the effort has met with total and unremitting failure. In 2001, Singapore's fertility rate was 1.41. By 2004 it was 1.24.

Today it is 1.1. Despite all the incentives, all of the public campaigns, all of the pleading, the average woman in Singapore can barely be bothered to have a single child. ♦

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Maggie Smith as Miss Jean Brodie, 1969

20TH CENTURY FOX / COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION

Memento Muriel

A writer of minor masterpieces

BY BARTON SWAIM

Muriel Spark
The Biography
by Martin Stannard
Norton, 627 pp., $35

I like purple passages in my life. . . . But not in my writing. I think it's bad manners to inflict a lot of emotional involvement on the reader—much nicer to make them laugh and to keep it short.

So Muriel Spark once remarked to an interviewer. Her 22 novels are almost all short, some less than 40,000 words. Her fiction is crisp and laconic rather than imposing. But it's not for that reason unserious; indeed the moral force of her best novels—*The Comforters*, *Memento Mori*, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *The Girls of Slender Means*—derives in part from the sheer efficiency of their narratives. Not a word strikes the ear as superfluous or out of place.

Before she died in 2006, Dame Muriel Spark was widely thought to be among the three or four greatest living writers in the English-speaking world. Her autobiography, *Curriculum Vitae*, appeared in 1992, but it only covered the years up to 1957, when her career as a novelist began. Martin Stannard's semi-authorized biography is therefore the first full portrait of the writer. And like most biographies of great writers, Stannard's book doesn't leave one with a heightened admiration for the subject's personal qualities. She was not cruel or a liar, just a solipsist; and the unpleasantness of her personality isn't of the kind to keep one from enjoying her books.

Muriel Camberg was born in Edinburgh, the daughter of a Jewish father and Gentile mother. She was an average student at the James Gillespie's School, a respectable but not outstanding school in Edinburgh, and although she liked and admired her teacher Christina Kay—the woman on whom Miss Jean Brodie would be based—there was nothing like the "Brodie set" of Muriel's most famous novel. She did not attend Oxbridge or even Edinburgh University. She attended Heriot-Watt, a kind of quality technical college in Edinburgh. There she took a course in précis-writing that, as she recalled in her autobiography, affected her prose style as much or more than the "broad, humane, poetry-loving approach" of Miss Kay and Gillespie's.

Aged 19 she married Sydney Oswald Spark, who then took a teaching post in Rhodesia. It was only after the marriage that Muriel discovered that Ossie (as she called him) had some fairly serious psychiatric problems. The pair had a son, Robin, but the marriage fell apart and Muriel, stranded in Africa for a few years, at last attained a berth on a troopship headed for Britain. After

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the war she lived as a literary bachelor in London, doing a series of odd jobs, living in bed sits, and publishing poetry and books on Mary Shelley and Wordsworth, the latter cowritten with a minor literary critic named Derek Stanford, with whom she cohabited. In 1947, with Stanford's help, she became editor of *Poetry Review*—a position carrying great esteem in those years—but was hounded out of it when she tried to make the journal interesting.

The break came in 1951. She had entered *The Observer*'s short story contest and won with a story—her first attempt—titled "The Seraph and the Zambesi." Like all of her best fiction, the story combines a light, vaguely unworldly texture with the authoritative tone of moral seriousness. The story won, beating out nearly 7,000 competitors. Over the next two years she produced a book of poetry, a selection of the poems of Emily Brontë, a critical biography of John Masefield, and several impressive review essays. For a number of years she had been interested in Christianity and in 1952 had been baptized an Anglican. It was not for her a merely intellectual decision: She informed Stanford, whom she still loved, that they would have to live separately until married.

In December of the following year, however, she experienced one of the famous mental breakdowns of literary history. While taking Dexedrine as an appetite suppressant, she began to discern coded messages hidden within the text of T.S. Eliot's new play *The Confidential Clerk*. Some of the messages, she told her friends in a tone of dead seriousness, were threats. This went on for months until, on the advice of a psychiatrist, she went off the drug.

Stanford, now more of a collaborator and friend than lover, wrote to Eliot sheepishly explaining the situation. "If there is any code concealed," Eliot responded, "I shall be interested to know what it is."

All this brought Spark to a crisis, and in 1954 she concluded that her only choice was to follow Cardinal Newman, whose writings she had been studying for several years, into the Roman Catholic Church. By the following fall her symptoms had abated, but she was an emotional wreck and clearly needed a change. Stanford had written to everyone he knew with money, asking for a donations to get his friend some sort of help. (Graham Greene contributed handsomely.) With Stanford's help, Spark was able to check herself into a Carmelite retreat center, The Friars at Aylesford Priory, and used the next several months of tranquility to write a novel about her experience.

That novel was *The Comforters*, a wickedly funny story about a young woman, a recent Catholic convert, who eventually learns to deal with her psychosis—she hears voices in her head—by scribbling down what the voices say and turning the results into a novel. Reviewers loved it. Evelyn Waugh had just published *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, a novel based on his own breakdown, and said frankly in his review that he was "struck by how much more ambitious [than his own] was Miss Spark's essay and how much better she had accomplished it."

With *The Comforters* Spark entered a six-year period of bewildering creativity. She produced seven novels: all of them intellectually engaging, funny, and beautifully written; three of them masterpieces. In *Memento Mori* (1959) a group of loosely connected elderly friends begins receiving phone calls. "Remember," the caller says, "you must die." Sometimes it's the voice of a man, sometimes of a woman. Sometimes the recipient responds aggressively, sometimes with fear, and in at least one instance with delighted equanimity. It's never clear who or what is behind the calls; a retired police inspector concludes the caller is "Death himself." In any case, the simple reminder of death's inevitability has the effect of uncovering all manner of secrets: blackmail, forgotten adulteries, intrigues. There have been very few writers capable of producing side-achingly funny novels on deadly serious themes. Muriel Spark was one of them.

Two novels and two years later Spark would write her most famous book, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961). Jean Brodie is the cantankerous, unconventional schoolteacher who wins the affection of several of her girls, chief among them Sandy Stranger, and who attempts to put her "stamp" on them and so predetermine their life courses. The novel is an attack on the propensity to subsume human beings under facile and simplistic categories: a propensity most clearly pronounced, the novel suggests, in the various disciplines of psychology. But in order to understand the work, it's necessary to get rid of the idea—frequently repeated by intelligent critics—that Spark was a "postmodern" novelist before that term existed. These critics point out, correctly, that the narrative voice of many of her novels, and particularly of her early novels, exercises an arbitrary control over the events they describe. What these critics miss, however, is that the narrators of Spark's early fiction are not disembodied "omniscient" narrators; they are characters in the story.

This is the key to understanding *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, in which the narrator, in gentle euphonious prose, makes jarringly strange remarks about some of the story's characters. "Speech is silver but silence is golden," says Miss Brodie in the middle of one of her classroom discussions.

> "Mary, are you listening? What was I saying?" [asks Miss Brodie]
>
> Mary Macgregor, lumpy, with merely two eyes, a nose and a mouth like a snowman, who was later famous for being stupid and always to blame and who, at the age of twenty-three, lost her life in a hotel fire, ventured, "Golden."
>
> "What did I say was golden?"
>
> Mary cast her eyes around her and up above. Sandy whispered, "The falling leaves."
>
> "The falling leaves," said Mary.
>
> "Plainly," said Miss Brodie, "you were not listening to me."

Now, it's true that Mary would die in a hotel fire—although why the narrator mentions it at this moment is certainly odd. But what sort of objective or omniscient narrator would refer to a character as having "merely two eyes, a nose and a mouth like a snowman"? And was Mary really stupid? There is evidence in the novel that she was not. In fact, this is no omniscient narrator at all. It's Sandy Stranger—who, as the narrative goes on to make clear, feels a

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compelling need to *believe* Mary was as stupid as she, Sandy, had always said she was. Once you realize that Sandy is the writer, you reread the book as a different story, almost as one might read the original text of a palimpsest. Otherwise *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is just another stylistically weird postwar novel to which academic critics may plausibly apply the term "postmodern."

Spark did something similar two years later. In *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), she drew on her experience in London just after the war. Again the narrative style strikes the ear as at once mellifluous and slightly odd, but the atmosphere is lighter and there is no hint of vendetta or self-justification. The novel's famous opening paragraph is Spark at her subtle best:

> Long ago in 1945 all the nice people in England were poor, allowing for exceptions. The streets of the cities were lined with buildings in bad repair or in no repair at all, bomb-sites piled with stony rubble, houses like giant teeth in which decay had been drilled out, leaving only the cavity. Some bomb-ripped buildings looked like the ruins of ancient castles until, at a closer view, the wallpapers of various quite normal rooms would be visible, room above room, exposed, as on a stage, with one wall missing; sometimes a lavatory chain would dangle over nothing from a fourth- or fifth-floor ceiling; most of all the staircases survived, like a new art-form, leading up and up to an unspecified destination that made unusual demands on the mind's eye. All the nice people were poor; at least, that was a general axiom, the best of the rich being poor in spirit.

The boarding house Spark had resided in, the Helena Club, becomes the May of Teck Club, which "exists for the Pecuniary Convenience and Social Protection of Ladies of Slender Means below the age of Thirty Years." These young women are at that stage of life when responsibilities are coming, but haven't come yet, and when it's still possible to act foolishly and childishly and get away with it. ("Filthy luck," one girl announces, "I'm preggers. Come to the wedding.") The blithe world of the May of Teck Club comes to an end when an unexploded bomb detonates and the building catches fire. In the ensuing mayhem, the lover of one of the girls, a young anarchist poet, witnesses an act of avarice so inhuman that he is driven to instant and radical spiritual reflection.

The Girls of Slender Means is Spark's best book. It's not so intellectually dazzling as *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, but it's funnier, more plausible without being "realist" in any sense, and its conclusion knocks the wind out of you.

KATHERINE EASTLAND / THE WEEKLY STANDARD

Spark had visited Israel in 1961 with the intention of writing a longer, more "serious" novel about her half-Jewish heritage. It took her four years to finish it. *The Mandelbaum Gate* (1965) is a competent and interesting work of fiction, but it lacks the graceful obliquity that had made her work famous, and in contrast to her other works, it takes longer to say less. A few critics praised the book, but mainly (one suspects) because by the mid-1960s critics were in the habit of praising her. In fact, she was no good at "big" themes on sprawling canvases. There would be no *Brideshead Revisited*. In the 1970s her productivity continued unabated, but something had clearly happened. It's almost as if, after the failure of the thematically ambitious *Mandelbaum Gate*, Spark retreated into a kind of soulless quest for formal originality. It's certainly true that her novels of the 1970s are often brilliantly original. In *The Driver's Seat* (1970), a northern European tourist orchestrates her own murder in Rome, her death foretold near the beginning of an eerie present-tense narrative ("She will be found tomorrow morning dead from multiple stab wounds"). *The Abbess of Crewe* (1974) replicates Watergate in a monastery. But these and the other works from the 1970s—*Not to Disturb* (1971), *Hothouse by the East River* (1973), *The Takeover* (1976), *Territorial Rights* (1979)—for all their sleek technique and sophisticated suggestiveness, leave one wondering what on earth they're about.

Curiously, it's precisely at this point—the 1970s—that Stannard's biography begins to bore. One sympathizes with literary biographers: The first half of their subjects' lives are almost always more interesting than the second half. Spark's life is no exception. In the early 1960s she had spent most of her time in New York and considered moving to America permanently, but had grown weary of it and moved to Italy, first to Rome, later to Tuscany. At least in Stannard's account, from roughly 1965 to the end in 2006, Spark's life consisted of little more than the writing of a novel every three or four years and a variety of quarrels with agents, editors, and friends. She seems to have fallen out with almost every friend she ever had, even cutting her son out of her will when he insisted that both her parents were Jewish, not just her father.

It's impossible to say whether the contentiousness and unhappiness Spark felt throughout the second half of her life

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was the cause or effect of the unevenness of her writing. I had always assumed it had to do with geography: Clearly, she should never have left Britain. In fact, though, she wrote *The Girls of Slender Means* entirely in New York, in an office provided by the *New Yorker*. The real trouble with Spark's later fiction is that she was too much of an innovator. She was not content to write more of the same. That is an understandable attitude, and a pardonable one in a woman who had written at least three minor masterpieces. Unfortunately, more of the same would have been better than the "experimental" *Hothouse by the East River* or the clever but thoroughly forgettable *Territorial Rights* or *The Only Problem* (1984)—the latter supposedly a reflection on the Book of Job but in fact a rambling academic snoozer.

Spark was always at her best, by contrast, when writing in the female voice. Her only works from the 1970s, '80s, or '90s to achieve indisputable critical success are the semi-autobiographical novels *Loitering with Intent* (1981) and *A Far Cry from Kensington* (1988). Both are narrated in the first-person and express aspects of Spark's own personality; and although neither exercises the moral power of her early novels, both engage the intellect on multiple levels and both are hilarious. Spark's strength as a novelist lay foremost in self-expression.

Martin Stannard had access to all of Muriel Spark's papers and correspondence and has been conducting interviews in preparation for this book for more than 15 years. He offers a fair share of genuine revelations: For instance, that in 1963 she had a strong romantic interest in Lionel Trilling. But this is not the biography Spark's admirers had hoped for.

There is the fact that Stannard is attitudinally ill-equipped to write a biography of Muriel Spark: Virtually all of her writings, in his view, are equally and unprecedentedly brilliant. He is, moreover, incapable of passing judgment on her sometimes-outrageous conduct. It's easy to enjoy the tantrums and eccentricities of a literary prima donna—Spark once checked herself into a hospital in Rome because her refrigerator was broken—but even the most sympathetic of biographers has a duty to admit it when his subject's behavior is manifestly culpable. Spark did virtually nothing to raise her son, leaving the job entirely to her parents and especially to her mother, for whom she had hardly a kind word. Stannard, for his part, never explicitly mentions this remarkable fact.

Equally irritating is Stannard's almost total avoidance of direct quotations from Spark's correspondence. He paraphrases throughout, directing readers to see manuscripts housed at the National Library of Scotland and elsewhere. Perhaps there was some difficulty with her estate; if so, Stannard or his publisher ought to have come to a satisfactory agreement before he brought out a full-length biography almost totally bereft of Spark's unpublished words. Nor is any of this made any easier by Stannard's intermittently awful prose. At any moment his sentences are apt to turn purple:

> The dutiful earnestness of the female students at Edinburgh University did not appeal. That was death. Art was life. . . . [Edinburgh] was the locus of conflicting memories: of those who had tried to impose guilt for the audacity of claiming independence, of the solid pleasures of a well-regulated, prelapsarian life.

And on William Shawn:

> a little big man, he was principled and devoid of arrogance. Complicated. Unknowable. A grave of confidences.

I'm told on reliable authority that, before she died, Spark read a draft of this work and hated it. It's not hard to see why. Still, after wading through 600 pages of Stannard's bumbling verbiage, Spark's understated, efficient prose delights more than ever. ♦

B&A

Singer of Zion

A fitting tribute to a great Jewish poet.

BY DAVID GELERNTER

This is a tour de force. Hillel Halkin's *Yehuda Halevi* is a complex, daring, and consistently fascinating biography of a complex and daring man, one of the great heroes of Hebrew literature and Jewish history. Halevi comes second only to King David in his fame and influence as a Hebrew poet. He was also a renowned theologian who, in his last years, abandoned life in the fast lane of medieval Spain to make the perilous journey to settle in the land of Israel.

Yehuda Halevi
by Hillel Halkin
Schocken, 368 pp., $26

Writing Halevi's biography is a different sort of perilous journey. It requires mastery of a wide range of complex material in many languages, the judgment to make good guesses where the record goes blank, and the sheer virtuosity to convey the essence of medieval Hebrew poetry in modern English. Halkin has completed the hard journey with distinction. His book is a fine wine with a million complex overtones, or a moonlit garden-court where the music of Halevi's poetry (a hidden fountain) mingles with the soft voice of his philosophy and the exotic fragrances of his long-ago life (Halkin calls him "the first great romantic figure in Jewish history")—and where you feel, too, like a persistent breeze, the strong connections between the great medieval poet and his 21st-century biographer. Halkin was born in America, settled in Israel, and became a compelling spokesman for Zionism and the resettlement of

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modern Jews in the Jewish state. Halevi is not merely a hero; he is Halkin's hero.

Halevi was born somewhere in the Muslim-ruled south of Spain between 1070 and 1075. His life-story is full of legends and counter-legends, and poems to be combed for clues about the poet—always a tricky business; but Halkin's readings are imaginative, bold, and usually convincing. To write Halevi's story is like riding a skittish horse that might bolt at any time, but Halkin guides the narrative with a sure hand. The end of his life is one of the central Halevi mysteries: He set out for Israel in 1140 and died a year later; some say he never reached his destination, others that he was killed by an Arab horseman at the very gates of Jerusalem. After sizing things up carefully, Halkin tends to believe version two.

Halevi wandered back and forth between the Christian- and Muslim-ruled parts of Spain; he was known to Jews all over the medieval world as the foremost poet of the age, a brilliant thinker and devoted communal leader. He lived in Spain during the *convivencia*, the supposedly "multicultural" era during which Jews thrived in Muslim Andalusia. But Halkin makes clear that life was no picnic for Andalusian Jews: Some did rise to power and prominence, but many experienced harassment, and there was an occasional vicious pogrom—such as the murder, in 1066, of 4,000 Jews in Granada. For Halevi, Andalusia seems to have been just barely more comfortable than Christian-ruled Toledo.

As a poet, he wrote medieval Hebrew (and sometimes Arabic) with panache and passion: He is the author of love-poems, prayers, and the famous *shirey tsiyon*, "songs of Zion"—poems of love and longing for Israel and Jerusalem. And the influence of his *Kuzari* as a work of Jewish theology is equaled only by Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed*. The *Kuzari* (written in Judeo-Arabic, Arabic in Hebrew characters) presents an imaginary conversation between a rabbi and the King of the Khazars about a typically medieval topic: whether Christianity, Islam, or Judaism is the best and truest religion. The king chooses Judaism. And in fact the pagan king of the remote and improbable nation of Khazaria did, indeed, become a Jew in the eighth century, and Khazaria remained (in effect) a Jewish state for several hundred years. (Halevi might have encountered Khazari Jews in Toledo.)

For Halkin, the *Kuzari* is an intellectual milestone: "More than any other Jewish book of the middle ages, *The Kuzari* insists on Judaism as a universal faith." But it's not only a work of theology; it is also the plot key of Halevi's life—and the center of Halkin's book, and of Halkin's powerful feelings for Halevi. The *Kuzari* ends with the rabbi's convincing himself that a Jew has no religiously honest choice but to pick up and go to Israel. And so, upon completing his book, Halevi picked up and went. "Does this make him the first Zionist?" Halkin asks, and answers, "A strong case for Halevi's proto-Zionism can be made." In other words, yes. (With the appropriate scholarly reservations. Halkin is every inch a scholar.)

So the great poet set off at the end of his life on the difficult, dangerous journey to Israel—itself a hazardous place to live, a bloody rag with Crusader and Muslim armies tearing at it from opposite ends. "Yehuda Halevi's friends missed the point when they urged him not to run the risk of travel to Palestine," writes Halkin in one of his most impressive passages. "The risk *was* the point." Everyone must have something he is willing to die for, writes Halkin, addressing his audience directly; otherwise, "he is trivial." (This paragraph alone is worth the price of the book.) A Jew, in particular, must be prepared to risk everything for Zion. Halevi did. And so did Halkin. When Halkin moved to Israel as a young man, the risks were no longer quite as great as they had been in Halevi's day; but they were great enough. As a soldier in the Israeli army, Halkin was wounded in the 1982 Lebanon war. In our own day the risks seem to grow by the hour.

World circles with Jerusalem at the center, from Yehuda Halevi's 'Book of Kusari' (15th c.)

BPK / SBB

Bringing this book safely to port must have been a chore, in part because of gaps in the record and the need for asides to explain where information comes from and how it has been assessed over the ages. Topics crop up, from the history of medieval Spain to Heinrich Heine's narrative poem about Halevi (parts of which Halkin translates from the German) to the author's conversation with a waiter at the "café-bar Juda Levi" near the "Plaza Juda Levi" in Cordoba—a city that is evidently proud of its great poet, and the Jewish tourist dollars for which he stands.

But harder even than weaving together the story's far-flung strands was the project of re-creating Halevi's poetry for an English-speaking audience. As a translator Halkin is resourceful, clever, inventive, and sometimes inspired. He conveys a sense of the beauty and depth of this medieval poetry, for all its complex prosody, its rhyme schemes that in some cases simply have no equivalent in English, and its constant biblical

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echoes and allusions. Sometimes Halkin transliterates the Hebrew, supplying accent marks and a literal translation. Sometimes he risks a rhymed English version—occasionally succeeding but usually, as in nearly all such translations, making the reader wince—partly in sympathy with the translator and partly in pure discomfort. Sometimes he settles for simple but effective prose (or free verse) translations, with evocative notes to convey the lyrical power of the Hebrew original.

Halkin is an entertaining writer. ("This is, one might say, the Hispano-Hebrew equivalent of a Hallmark greeting card.") Sometimes his prose is wonderful. (As Halevi sets out by ship for Israel, he "would have been alerted by the activity on deck: a towline being secured to a prow belaying pin, the last visitors and vendors shooed ashore. The telltales trailed eastward.") And sometimes it is awkward but effective. The last chapter, in which Halkin joins his story to Halevi's, wobbles at times but recovers to make a strong finish. The book is nearly always convincing, nearly always compelling: a biography to last many generations. ♦

B&A

A Capital Ship

Profits and losses in the history of markets.

BY ELIZABETH POWERS

Two hundred years ago, explaining to his contemporaries how capitalism worked, David Ricardo gave an example of the theory of comparative advantage in trade: Portugal and England could both produce wine and cloth, but each would fare better economically by specializing in the one it could bring to the market more efficiently and cheaply. Such specializations continue to fuel the capitalist economic system. The processor of my husband's iPad, for instance, is designed by Apple in Cupertino, California, and manufactured by South Korea-based Samsung Electronics Co. Another South Korea-based company, LG Display and Japan's Seiko Epson Corp. make the LCD display while Taiwan-based Wintek Corp. makes the glass overlay necessary to detect touches of users' fingertips.

The Relentless Revolution
A History of Capitalism
by Joyce Appleby
Norton, 494 pp., $29.95

The examples of South Korea and Taiwan bring out an aspect that Ricardo, who died in 1823, could hardly have envisioned. The present comparative advantage enjoyed by South Koreans and Taiwanese, unlike that of the Portuguese wine producers, does not depend on a traditional commodity native to their homelands, unless it be small and dexterous hands. For the amazing integration of production and markets to work and bring an iPad to your local retailer, all a country needs are the legal protection of property rights (including intellectual property or shares in a corporation), the outlawing of monopoly protection, a good internal transportation and communication system, secure labor, supplies, and customers. Not to put too fine a point on it, is it any wonder that there is probably not a single component of any high tech product owned by readers of this review that was made in South America or (excluding Israel) the Middle East?

Why that is the case is the real history of capitalism, an economic system that, about 500 years ago, began to upend the traditional foundations of society, predicated for millennia on pervasive scarcity. By introducing innovation, initiative, and risk-taking into human endeavors, capitalism has freed mankind from the priorities of subsistence, security, and status imprisonment and set us on an unpredictable path of wealth-creation, disestablishment of traditional authority, and social mobility. How that happened and why it was the West that initiated the process is Joyce Appleby's subject.

An established academic historian, Appleby joins the ranks of recent economic popularizers, notably William J. Bernstein and Timothy Brook. Like them, she begins with what is acknowledged to be the point of capitalist takeoff, 1500, when certain circumstances allowed Western Europe to escape the seemingly cyclical historical pattern of feast and famine. Improvements in agriculture reduced the percentage of the population required to feed a country, traditionally between 80 and 90 percent, creating surplus labor (and, eventually, consumers). These improvements occurred at a time when European merchants discovered the trade winds and began to tap the riches of the Indies and the Americas and bring new products to the homes of Dutch burghers. After the laws of the heavens were revealed in the 17th century, inventors were able to "capitalize" on the scientific revolution and unlock the secrets of nature's workings. The harnessing of steam power in England by the 19th century was a great step forward for mankind, and it's been nonstop progress ever since.

Appleby is very good on the long view, particularly on the transformation of the traditional social world. Though a self-identified "left-leaning liberal with strong, if sometimes contradictory, libertarian strains," she is not nostalgic about what has been lost, especially not "the straitjacket of custom." Her account is refreshingly free of Marx and is appreciative of the gains produced by the freeing-up and application of human enterprise. Appleby's strength is the quick, concise summary, reflecting capitalism's "relentless" history.

> The preeminent industrial powers of the nineteenth century—Great Britain and its two rivals, Germany and the United States—transformed the

Elizabeth Powers is editing a collection of essays on the intellectual origins of freedom of speech in the 18th century.

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physical world. They laid iron tracks across thousands and thousands of miles. They built enormous factories to which they drew millions of men and women, most of them recently off the farm. They collected capital in banks, consumed coal, finished steel, dug minerals from the earth, leveled hills, diverted the water from rivers into canals, and generally displayed the previously undetected strength and ingenuity of human beings. Despite the impersonality of all these changes, particular people brought them about: swashbuckling heroes of enterprise and the workingmen and women whose lives industrialization had turned upside down. A few men so completely grasped the dynamics of capitalism that they established firms that are still among the world's largest.

When she gets to the 20th century, however, her account becomes distorted. It mixes social and political history with a history of technology, a parade of wonders, with one marvelous invention succeeding another. Reflecting her view that capitalism is "a cultural system rooted in economic practices," it also becomes something of a tale of woe (she ends with the financial crisis of 2008), as country after country throughout the world is drawn into the quest for profit (in particular China and India), bringing with it environmental destruction and other human costs. Capitalism is even faulted for the plight of Zimbabwe. Though Appleby concedes that individual ingenuity is an engine of capitalist progress and that capitalism tends to erode social differences, she believes that government must play a larger role in solving the problems now facing us, whether it be global warming or the inability of Africa to climb out of its despond. In other words, instead of continuing to encourage people to do their own thing and thereby come up with solutions to these problems, we should return to the patriarchal world—now to be ruled by far-seeing elites—from whose yoke capitalism freed us.

It is a familiar litany of liberal hysteria, and it points up the divide between liberals and conservatives. The divide concerns the nature of progress. Appleby favors progress, because it destroyed all the ancient patriarchal institutions, reservoirs of evil practices that impeded human progress. Yet it is evident that great numbers of humans, despite material advance, remain greedy, self-serving, and contemptuous of people who aren't like themselves, not to mention that they make bad decisions. This lack of moral improvement must be the fault of the economic system. Thus, the need for state intervention to make us better people.

'A Goldsmith in His Shop' by Petrus Christus, ca. 1450

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART / ART RESOURCE

Material affluence has, of course, improved our manners, as Scottish economists noted two centuries ago. At base, however, capitalism is morally neutral: There is no Good, only goods. In the market everything is fungible, with the emancipation of slaves and women on par with freeing up the energy in a block of coal. The former simply liberated two groups of humans for productive economic work and turned them into consumers. Likewise, such vaunted liberal values as openness and toleration enable the economic system to expand market shares. Progressives like Appleby confuse the moral and the material. Thus, they can be expected to be in the vanguard, whether it concerns the acquisition of fine material goods or the rejection of yesterday's mores.

Conservatives favor progress, too, insofar as it unlocks human potential and gives tools to individuals to craft their own destiny. Nothing in the Chinese or Islamic empires at the height of their glory shows a glimmer of interest in either. In the merchant towns of Western Europe, however, long before Columbus sighted Hispaniola or Newton discovered the universal laws of motion, there was continuous agitation against rulers for individual and civil rights. Thus, by the 17th century, property ownership, rights of self-defense and inheritance, contract enforcement, and so on were firmly established in some places in the West, particularly in the places that counted in the emergence of capitalism, Holland and England. And insofar as a country establishes such institutions, the more open it will be to the entrepreneurial spirit: Japan, Taiwan, South Korea. Otherwise, include it among the Have-Nots. Appleby notes, but gives short shrift to, institutions.

There is, of course, a dark side to capitalism, and it is called dissatisfaction. It is the flip side of innovation, which profits from our willingness to abandon what we loved only yesterday for a product that will probably also fail to deserve our love. Liberals have rebranded their own dissatisfactions as "critique," which constantly demands that the supposed flaws in our institutions be corrected. These institutions, however, are the ones that gave the modern economic system its legs in the first place. It is not capitalism that is relentless but the assaults by liberals on the values that are essential if this system is to continue to thrive and enrich us all: Hard work, individual responsibility, creativity, self-discipline. As my mother used to say, some people have it too good. ♦

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B&A

Unroaring Twenties

The soporific effect of flappers, gangsters, and 'Boardwalk Empire.' **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

The past week was an important one for HBO, the cable channel that singlehandedly transformed American television 15 years or so ago when its bosses saw an opening and decided to create programs that would surpass the quality of what was available on broadcast.

First came the ominous news: HBO's audience is shrinking, though the decline is minuscule: 216,000 subscribers out of 28.6 million. A household's cancellation of its HBO subscription could simply be a manifestation of the nation's overall economic woes. Or it could be the onset of a stampede away from pay cable. This is the way broadcast television began to lose its audience in the 1980s, 10 years after the arrival of cable television—slight declines at first, followed by a rapid acceleration. It's now 10 years since the arrival of broadband, and the HBO numbers suggest that broadband may now be in the process of doing to cable what cable did to broadcast television.

HBO moved into programming so aggressively because it needed to give its giant subscriber base more than just movies, boxing, and late night pseudo-porn. It had to give them a reason to be proud they subscribed, and something to talk about to other people. It got that, in spades, with its signature series, *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City*. But it's been years since they went off the air. Now the network has hits, like the incredibly violent and dirty vampire comedy *True Blood*, and prestige productions, like the $200 million miniseries *The Pacific*, but it does not have the show that dominates the cultural discussion. And that, too, may be playing some role in the network's decline.

And so came the second important HBO news of the week: The premiere of *Boardwalk Empire*, a lavish new series so theoretically prestigious that its pilot was directed by the most distinguished director in America, Martin Scorsese. It is clearly intended to be the Next Big Thing. Its creator and primary author, Terence Winter, was one of the guiding hands on *The Sopranos*.

This is old-time picture-making on a grand scale, with period sets and hundreds of extras and thousands of costumes and fancy special effects. It has a wonderful and picturesque setting, Atlantic City in 1920, and attempts to tell the story of the creation of the great crime syndicates of the 20th century—which rose to power and influence with the advent of Prohibition and the instant criminal underground economy it spawned.

And yet *Boardwalk Empire* is a dud, and a peculiar dud as well. At nearly every turn, it consciously evokes classic gangster movies of the past (and *The Sopranos*) in ways that only make you wish you were seeing them instead of this mimeographed copy. The concluding scene of the first episode is a headshaking rip-off of the cross-cutting massacre with which *The Godfather* concludes. The same episode features an important sequence set in New Jersey's Pine Barrens—the location of one of the most memorable *Sopranos* episodes, also written by Terence Winter, who should have chosen a different setting.

It indulges in every other once-interesting, now-tiresome cliché of the post-*Godfather* gangster era. Every time a character inaugurates a long anecdotal speech, we just know it's going to conclude with an act of violence against the person to whom he's speaking. If the camera comes and crowds in on somebody's shoulder, it's a clear sign that in 10 seconds a gun is going to be placed against his temple.

There isn't a memorable character to be seen here. The protagonist, a bizarrely whiny political boss named Nucky Thompson, is entirely uncompelling. The usually wonderful character actor Steve Buscemi is utterly lost in the role. He is as comfortable portraying a corrupt politician's gladhanding fakery as Mike Castle would be attending a Tea Party convention. Even worse is Michael Pitt's Jimmy Darmody, the second central character. We watch him for hours, with girl troubles and job troubles and post-traumatic stress disorder from World War I, and every moment is an endless agony of pointless boredom. And on it goes.

All of this contributes to the essential inauthenticity at the heart of *Boardwalk Empire*. Take its extraordinary set, a reconstruction of the Atlantic City boardwalk that must have cost in the tens of millions. Not for a second do you lose yourself in it. It's too clean, too spanking, too unlived-in. There isn't a cigarette butt to be seen on the wood planks. It more closely resembles the Boardwalk Inn at Walt Disney World, just as *Boardwalk Empire* suggests HBO is in a period of creative decline of exactly the sort into which the Walt Disney Studio descended in the 25 years between *101 Dalmatians* and *The Little Mermaid*. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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"[President Obama] was meeting with a Fairfax family for a backyard discussion on the economy in an effort to improve voter perceptions about his empathy with ordinary people. Unlike former President Clinton, who famously felt the pain of voters during a recession, Obama has not connected emotionally with voters over their worries and fears."

—The Hill, *September 14, 2010*

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Seeking to boost low polls, Obama meets more families

'LET ME IN, I JUST WANT TO TALK'

Efforts to avoid president prove futile

BY THERESA VARGAS AND NIA-MALIKA HENDERSON

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: THE WEEKLY STANDARD/APIMAGES

Pres. Obama launches listening tour, hoping Americans listen to him.

When her doorbell rang on a Sunday afternoon, Meghan Mayberry assumed it was another salesman pushing shower curtain rings or a student running a magazine drive. Instead, Mayberry found President Barack Obama standing at her doorstep, waiting to be let in. "In a way," says the Fairfax mother of three, "it's a lot worse."

"Your house is a mess," explains Mayberry, "the kids are running around, and now here's the president stepping over toys, seating himself on the couch, with dozens of photographers in tow—many of them asking if there's anything in my fridge." The president was all smiles, though, insisting he was simply eager to learn of Mayberry's financial situation and hoping to convince her he cares.

"I want to thank Mrs. Mayberry for her hospitality and apologize for the broken chandelier—the guy with the boom mic did that, not me," said Mr. Obama to the press gaggle crammed in the living room. "As you know, I've been meeting with families, one block at a time, to let them know I empathize with them in a most humanly, nonrobotic way, that I am cognizant of their precarious monetary circumstances, and that I am here to listen." The president then related to Mayberry his own personal hardships and handed her an autographed copy of "The Audacity of Hope" before moving on to the next house. One reporter, on his way out, informed her the toilet was broken.

With his approval numbers sagging, the president says he is determined to reconnect with Americans. Following his visit to the Mayberry house, Obama walked across yards to the next-door neighbor. "I can see you!" he said, peering through the glass. "I hear kids and your TV is on. I'm not leaving until you open this door so I can connect with you." The Wheeler family finally relented, but insisted the majority of the press remain outside. "Not a problem," said Mr. Obama. "As long as I can bring in my TelePrompt-

HELLO? CONTINUED ON A6

New Trump Offer to Move Mosque

'Trump International Hotel Las Vegas & Mosque'

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